DESENNE, VIVALDI, AND CARPENTIER: INTERTEXTUALITY IN *THE TWO SEASONS (OF THE CARIBBEAN TROPICS)*

by

María J. Romero Ramos

Submitted to the faculty of the
Jacobs School of Music in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree,
Doctor of Music
Indiana University
May 2021

Accepted by the faculty of the
Indiana University Jacobs School of Music,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Music

Doctoral Committee

_____
Blair Johnston, Research Director

_____
Kevork Mardirossian, Chair

_____
Stephen Wyrczynski

_____
Mimi Zweig

April 26, 2021

Copyright © 2021

María J. Romero Ramos

To my mom,

Marina Herminia Ramos Zabala

Table of Contents

List of Examples

List of Figures

Chapter 1: INTERTEXTUALITY IN DESENNE'S *THE "TWO SEASONS" (OF THE CARIBBEAN TROPICS)*

Introduction

The impetus to write my doctoral final project on Paul Desenne's *The Two Seasons (of the Caribbean Tropics)* [1] (2003), a chamber concerto for solo violin, strings, and harpsichord, started in the early years of my doctoral studies at Indiana University while I was working for the Latin American Music Center (LAMC). I first heard of Paul Desenne through the LAMC's Recording Competition of works by Latin American composers; the previous year's competition winner, cellist Nicholas Mariscal, included Desenne's *Jaguar Songs* for solo cello (2002) in his album *Nubes Bajas: a collection of solo cello music from Latin America*.[2] I was excited to learn of a new living Venezuelan composer and began researching his work. Immediately fascinated by the innovation and wit in his composition titles and descriptions, I felt an instant connection with Desenne's music upon listening. It intrigued me that the program notes he wrote on several of his pieces were composed with such eloquence, poetry, imagery, and humor. Most importantly, it was clear that Desenne was a multi-layered artist with a rich and varied background who composed in an equally rich and multi-layered language that was profoundly cognizant of culture, history, and tradition.

Soon I discovered the "Two Seasons" and was captivated by the program notes the composer wrote about the work.[3] This piece was particularly appealing because of the clear

---

[1] This work will be referred to as the "Two Seasons" from this point forward.

[2] Nicholas Mariscal, *Nubes Bajas: a collection of solo cello music from Latin America* (Bloomington, IN: Trustees of Indiana University, 2013, compact disc).

[3] Paul Desenne, http://pauldesenne.com/latin-concert-music-program-notes.php (accessed 6 February 2014).

reference to Vivaldi's *Le Quattro Stagioni*, commonly known as the "Four Seasons,"[4] and the clever adaptation to the seasons found in the Caribbean region. At the heart of the piece is a layering of values and traditions—cultural, geographical, historical, aesthetic—that relate to my musical life in profound ways.

I have studied historical performance practice and performed on period instruments since my undergraduate at the University of North Texas and during my time at Indiana University, while at the same time obtaining my degrees in modern violin performance. From very early on, I have felt a duality in my musical identity that I saw reflected in Desenne's works. I saw through his works a composer who navigated both the "baroque" and the "modern" worlds, found connections between the past and the present, and managed to merge the two – and everything in-between – into an all-encompassing, multifaceted, and dynamic musical language. Not only did his music successfully bridge two worlds with which I passionately associated myself, but it also helped me reconnect with another essential aspect of my musical identity that I had yearned for during my residency in the United States – that is, my Latin American musical roots. Desenne saturated the hybrid world of modern and Baroque performance practice as I knew it with other important strains of the Latin American musical lineage, and he placed them all on an equal level to create a musical language that is a true expression of our Latin American cultural heritage. Moreover, his writings pose the seemingly fictional notion that Baroque music exists in Venezuela today in the form of traditional folk music, an idea which I have come to embrace and will expand upon in my analysis – including a reassessment of the term 'baroque'.

I left my home in Venezuela at age sixteen to study classical music in the United States, and when I first learned of Desenne's music, I had spent almost half my life living outside my home country. Nevertheless, when I listened to Desenne's works, I felt reconnected with my

[4] This work will be referred to as the "Four Seasons" from this point forward.

roots, with sounds and traditions that I grew up with and longed to relive. While listening to the "Two Seasons," I found myself to be both an insider and an outsider. On the one hand, I was someone who understood the Latin American natural sounds and references Desenne made in his compositions in a way that no one who has not lived those experiences cannot fully understand (without guidance). On the other hand, I was also someone who was no longer immersed in those experiences and traditions, looking wistfully from abroad into that way of life. It was this moment and realization from which stemmed a desire to provide one possible roadmap, a guide to other performers and listeners into this musical world through a perspective which shares commonalities with those of Desenne's by means of our heritage, as well as an in-depth look into the philosophical frame around which this piece is conceived. Through the study of the philosophies that influenced Desenne's work, the idea of interpreting a Latin American composition from the eyes of an artist from Latin America becomes an important topic of discussion. This is the case especially in regards to the description and reinvention of our musical language and identity, culminating with a call to action for Latin American musicians across genres to take artistic responsibility in an era of cultural hybridization and anti-Eurocentrism.

While the impetus and decision to write about the "Two Seasons" was of a personal nature, my research has uncovered an incredible amount of extra-musical subtext and depth in Desenne's creational processes, which has only strengthened my desire to shine a light on some of the philosophical and cultural complexities of this work. When asked in a recent interview what inspired him to create, Desenne expressed that he oftentimes starts with a concept rather than a precise musical idea or sound, a "conceptual distillation which emanates from very diverse sources – musical, poetic, philosophical, theatrical – until producing a work consisting purely of sounds."[5] Desenne also stated that he does not believe in the concept of evolution or progress

[5] Herman Hudde, "Tertulia con Paul Desenne (A gathering with Paul Desenne)" (Revista Musical Chilena, Año LXXI, julio-diciembre, 2017, Nº 228), 97. "[Parto de ahí, de una idea más que de un sonido,

when it comes to his musical language; instead, he sees it as an accumulation, a personal investigation, which results in a collage of musical languages informed and inspired by his personal interests and experiences.[6] This is tied to a lack of adherence to any particular compositional style or school of thought, an idea that will resurface in my analysis of his anti-academic views regarding musical composition and the role of traditional music in academia. These will be guiding points in my analysis of the "Two Seasons": an investigation of the experiences and philosophies that have shaped this work, as well as of the diverse musical layers and cultural references interwoven in it.

The focus of the first chapter will be the philosophical context surrounding Desenne's artistic vision as a Latin American composer, especially the influence of Alejo Carpentier's literary ideas on the baroque and "the marvelous real" in Latin America, and how these helped shape Desenne's own ideas regarding Latin America's musical history and identity. This involves an examination of the intertextuality between Desenne's the "Two Seasons" and Carpentier's novel *Concierto Barroco*, exposing the works' conceptual and philosophical correlation. This dialogue facilitates a study of Vivaldi's presence in the "Two Seasons" and of the intertextuality between the two sets of concerti, leading to a more in-depth theoretical analysis of the first of the two concerti, *Invierno* (Rainy Season)"[7] in the second chapter. The second chapter, then, will focus on an analysis of the borrowing, quotation, and transfiguration of figures and gestures from Vivaldi's "Four Seasons," of the hybridization of these elements with other Latin American musical and cultural traditions, and of their convergence in fulfilling the programmatic nature of Desenne's work.

---

de] un *destilado conceptual* que emana de fuentes muy diversas, musicales, poéticas, filosóficas, teatrales, hasta producir una obra de puros sonidos."

[6] Hudde, 96.

[7] This concerto will be referred to as *Invierno* from this point forward.

Though experiencing a piece of music is a deeply personal journey, it is my hope that my insights into this work will allow for its musical and extra-musical content to be more accessible and meaningful to anyone who comes across it regardless of their cultural background. Furthermore, a close look into the Desenne's experiences and inspirations illuminates a deeper understanding of his views and portrayal of Latin America's complex, multilayered culture and his desire to rewrite Latin America's musical history. Therefore, my analysis—in both chapters—aims to inspire audiences, institutions and performers alike to an even greater appreciation for the valuable cultural emblems depicted in Desenne's work and for what his music and ideas represent for Latin America's contemporary musical identity.

Paul Desenne's Background and Context

Desenne defines his musical language, as mentioned above, as an accumulation and a personal investigation rather than an evolution; the latter would in his opinion imply that what comes before is of lesser quality than what comes after it. The following biographical background highlights a wealth and diversity of experiences that influenced his artistic vision and contributed to the musical narrative of the "Two Seasons". A composer – as well as cellist, writer, and actor, Desenne was born in Caracas, Venezuela on December 7, 1959 to North-American astrologer Monica Hable and French doctor Jean-Jacques Desenne.[8] Growing up in a tri-cultural household, Desenne was early on exposed to many musical traditions from around the world thanks to his parents' diverse tastes in music, including Bob Dylan, Jan Baez, Ravi Shankar, and Baroque era composers.[9] Venezuelan folk music and other Latin American folk genres were not common soundtracks while growing up, though he later discovers his Latin American musical roots during his time in France through the many varied musical experiences and musicians he encounters

[8] Javier A. Montilla, "The flute music of Paul Desenne: A comparative analytical study of representative works" (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nebraska – Lincoln, 2010), 1.

[9] Montilla, 1.

there.[10] Even though Desenne's parents were not musicians themselves, his family has a long track record of eclectic musical aptitude. His paternal grandmother and uncle played the piano; two of his mother's grandparents were Bohemian violinists, one of which later took on the clarinet, and together they formed a Klezmer violin and clarinet duo; and his mother's great uncle composed polkas and dance music in the United States.[11]

During his teenage years, Desenne played drums in his school's *gaita* bands and also tried to learn the guitar.[12] The latter resulted in a failed attempt because his teacher would not accept Desenne's determination to play the instrument in reversed left to right position, which he considered necessary due to being left-handed. He stopped taking lessons but continued playing by devising his own way of playing the guitar "upside-down" and imagining that the bottom four strings were an electric bass, which would later inspire him to play the cello.[13] American pop music groups also influenced Desenne during this impressionable time in his life, and along with some other school friends, he started a band like the ones they saw on television.[14] Their short-lived yet highly successful band was instrumental in jumpstarting Desenne's career in music as it was a testing ground for playing, performing, and writing for different instruments as well as collaborating with other musicians. Around the time the band discontinued its ventures, Desenne started formal music studies; he began taking lessons on the cello as his primary instrument as well as music theory and solfege lessons.

At age 14, he attended composition classes at the Universidad Metropolitana in Caracas with Greek musician Yannis Ioannidis, who provided Desenne with a strong, well-rounded, and

---

[10] Montilla, 6.
[11] Montilla, 1-2.
[12] *Gaita* is musical genre from Venezuela which is traditionally performed during Christmas celebrations. José Peñín and Walter Guido, *Enciclopedia de la Música en Venezuela* (Caracas: Fundación Bigott, 1988), 633.
[13] Montilla, "Paul Desenne," 3.
[14] Montilla, 2.

systematic musical foundation.[15] Ioannidis' revolutionary ideas involved the search for extra-musical roots in music and a strong aversion toward stagnant academicism in musical thought: "Ioannidis always looked for the cultural, phenomenological, material, artistic, historical, philosophical root to explain a musical object discussed in class: where the harmony came from, where the vocal or instrumental detail came from; that is to say, it was a historical, almost materialist radicalism meant to understand the determining elements of a genre or a score."[16] Studying with Ioannidis planted an ideological seed in Desenne's mind, which would later contribute to his philosophical views on musical composition and help shape his musical identity.

In 1975, Desenne attended the Fifth Latin American Contemporary Music Composition Course in Buenos Aires along with other Venezuelan musicians, aided by governmental support.[17] There he was surrounded by the most eminent Latin American composers of the time as well as immersed in groundbreaking ideas and discussions. One of them was the big question of what the identity of Latin American music was, an idea upon which Desenne would continue to ponder in years to follow and which would profoundly define his own compositional language. The following year Desenne moved to Paris to complete his high school studies.[18] He decided to continue his education in music – his alternative was philosophy – and went on to receive degrees and highest performance honors from the Conservatoire National de Région de Boulogne Billancourt and the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Paris.[19] Notable figures who influenced his formal training the most at these conservatories were Michel Strauss and Philippe Muller as his cello teachers; Marc-Olivier Dupin, Solange Ancona, and Luc Ferrari as his composition

---

[15] Hudde, "Tertulia," 98.

[16] Hudde, 99. "Ioannidis buscaba siempre la raíz cultural, fenomenológica, material, artística, histórica, filosófica para explicar algún objeto musical considerado en la clase: de dónde venía la armonía, de dónde venía tal detalle vocal o instrumental; es decir, era un radicalism histórico casi materialista para entender los elementos determinantes en un género o en una partitura."

[17] Montilla, "Paul Desenne," 4.

[18] Montilla, 5.

[19] Montilla, 6.

teachers; William Christie as his Baroque performance practice teacher; and Gérard Caussé, Alain Meunier, Jean Mouillère, and Maurice Bourgue as chamber music coaches.[20]

A vital facet of Desenne's learning happened while playing on the streets of Paris. This non-conservatory environment was to Desenne a school in Venezuelan music and traditional music from other parts of the world, where he had the opportunity to perform with various Latin American musicians living in Paris and many other musicians who were well versed in the folkloric, non-Western traditions of their countries.[21] He found himself fully immersed in an inventive and spontaneous style of music making which was foreign to the conservatory setting, learning new musical languages of the world and their roots, as well as performing, arranging, and composing in these styles for different traditional instruments.[22] Desenne learned to collaborate with Argentinean, Colombian, Armenian, Algerian, and other popular ensembles on his cello; he also met fellow Venezuelan musicians who played the *arpa llanera*[23] and who helped him learn how to accompany Venezuelan traditional music on the *cuatro*[24] and the maracas. While reminiscing about his residency in France, Desenne said, "That's when I realized what I had in my ear and in my head."[25] Although each one of these collaborations contributed a great deal to Desenne's creative palette, one in particular had the biggest impact on his vision as a composer, and that was his interaction with Guillermo Jiménez Leal (1947).

---

[20] Montilla, 6.

[21] Luis Manuel Fernandez, "Paul Desenne's Sonata for Violin Solo: A Theoretical and Practical Study" (Doctoral dissertation, University of Miami, 2004), 6.

[22] Montilla, "Paul Desenne," 6.

[23] *Arpa llanera* refers to the folkloric type of harp typical in the Venezuelan plains. The *arpa llanera* is traditionally heard with maracas and *cuatro* accompaniment.

[24] The *cuatro* is a four-string instrument derived from the Spanish Renaissance guitar and named after its four strings.

[25] Hudde, "Tertulia," 101. "Ahí fue cuando me di cuenta de lo que tenía en mi oído y en mi cabeza."

Leal, a composer, poet, and folk singer from Barinas, Venezuela who specialized in the music from the Venezuelan *Llanos*,[26] was studying musicology in Sorbonne, France when he met Desenne.[27] Leal not only taught Desenne numerous Venezuelan traditional songs, but most importantly, he introduced him to his own notion of Latin American Baroque music which referred to the then-innovative concept of composing for European Baroque instruments using Venezuelan folk musical forms. Desenne describes that Leal opened his mind to "the idea of a Venezuelan Baroque fiction, based on the bridge which exists between the *arpa llanera* and music for strings."[28] This bridge consists of the fact that this type of harp and other folk instruments – many of which find their roots in their European Baroque counterparts – are very popular and widely played in Venezuela, as is the music of Baroque composers such as Bach and Vivaldi because it oftentimes represents the first exposure listeners and students have to classical music. Leal's vision sparked in Desenne a curiosity for exploring textures and the technique of imitating the sounds and gestures of Venezuelan folk instruments on classical instruments, such as the strumming of the *cuatro* with the violin and bow. This treatment of the folk language was an inventive departure from the more common technique of merely orchestrating a romantic harmonization underneath a preexisting folk tune with classical instruments.[29] Leal's and Desenne's vision of the Latin American Baroque symbolizes a fusion of Baroque and folk forms and styles which is unbound by the limitations of Western musical constructs; it represents a reinvented, limitless new Baroque language which bridges the European musical footprint in Latin America and the rich and diverse musical forms which make up the Latin American musical tradition.

---

[26] Venezuelan plains or savannas.

[27] Hudde, "Tertulia," 101.

[28] Hudde, "Tertulia," 102. "[Leal] me abrió la idea de una ficción barroca venezolana, basada en ese puente que existe entre el arpa llanera y la música de cuerdas."

[29] Hudde, "Tertulia," 101-102.

After finishing his formal and informal studies in the conservatories and streets of Paris, Desenne returns to Venezuela in 1987 to join the Orquesta Sinfónica Simón Bolívar and teach at the Instituto Universitario de Estudios Musicales (IUDEM), eventually becoming El Sistema's resident composer. He leads an active solo and collaborative performing career while continuing his "musical research" into redefining the Latin American musical identity.[30] In 2002, he took a break from his multi-faceted career and retreats to the "jungle-clad mountains south of Caracas" to focus on composition.[31] Being immersed in this environment, influenced by the sounds and events of nature, inspired Desenne to write works in what he calls a "tropical baroque" style, including works such as the *Jaguar Songs* and the "Two Seasons". Regarding the role of nature in folklore, Desenne believes that animals and insects "have a place in the Venezuelan language and mythology because of their strength, their power and intervention in the human world" and their distinctive sounds represent "a linguistic and cultural phenomenon, and a very strong, very powerful sense of geographical location."[32] He explains that "nature, such the presence of animals – not domestic, but those which surround us – are also the first manifestation of the seasons which affect us: the rain, drought, heat, humidity. All of this represents something very important which has a place in music and cannot be escaped."[33] It is this exploration of the sounds of nature and the fusion of a Baroque language with traditional forms that combined represent the essence

---

[30] Hermann Hudde and Paul Desenne, "Rupturas con las tradiciones musicales de la modernidad a través del mestizaje y lo real maravilloso: Una conversación con el compositor Paul Desenne" (Latin American Music Review 36, no. 1, 2015), 41.

[31] Corydon Ireland, *Of the Bean I Sing: History of coffee inspires Radcliffe Fellow's opera* (Harvard Gazette, 2011), https://www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/news/in-news/bean-i-sing (accessed 11 January 2020).

[32] Hudde and Desenne, "Rupturas," 42. "[Los animales, las aves y también las chicharras, los grillos, los sapos] tienen un lugar en el lenguaje y la mitología venezolana por su fuerza, su potencia e intervención en el mundo humano. [No puedes tener una tarde en Caracas sin que un cristofué llegue a tu ventana. Lo oyes y, entonces, tienes] un fenómeno lingüístico, cultural y una ubicación geográfica muy fuerte, muy potente."

[33] Hudde and Desenne, 43. "La naturaleza como presencia de los animales —no domésticos— sino de los que nos rodean que son también la primera manifestación de las estaciones que nos afectan: la lluvia, la se-quía, el calor, la humedad."

of the “Two Seasons”. Naturally, this concept evokes the work’s connection to Vivaldi’s “Four Seasons,” which also gives musical expression to the seasons and how they are experienced in a different part of the world. The Vivaldian presence in the “Two Seasons” symbolizes not only the similarity in the programmatic nature of the two works, but also the historical and cultural ties – and the suggestion of a present-day Latin American Baroque – which perpetually bond Europe and Latin America.

The manifestation of a Baroque language in Desenne’s work originates from his exposure to and experimentation with Leal’s ideas and it is reinforced by Desenne’s investigation into Latin America’s musical and cultural roots – the tracing of the Renaissance and Baroque seeds planted by the colonists. This exploration exposes a preservation of extraordinary oral traditions, forms, and fundamentally Baroque instruments alive in the form of traditional musical instruments. In the following excerpt from Desenne’s program notes about the “Two Seasons,” the composer describes his theory regarding the existence of Baroque elements in Latin American traditional music today and how this concept influenced his work:

> Some traditional songforms in the Spanish Caribbean remind us of Mediterranean renaissance and baroque forms, a phenomenon which is comparable to the presence of Celtic roots in some Beatles songs. Vivaldi's music is full of Mediterranean reminiscences, and is directly connected with our Caribbean culture through its content and its style; the extensive use of strummed guitars, mandolins, and the like, here in Latin America, seem to prolong the baroque handling of musical material into our present musical universe. One direct example: I named the last movement of this tropical Two Seasons "Polo Quemao" because Vivaldi's original season, *Summer* (which appears here twisted, molten and charred at the end of a terrible dry season) contains a perfect songform any Venezuelan would recognize as his own: the “Polo Margariteño,” woven into a marvelous Vivaldian tapestry. This proves that the Italian composer was also weaving bits and pieces of popular songforms coming from the rich sources of popular music to create new variations for his instrument, a perfectly appropriate baroque procedure, and possibly the principal one in that particular period.[34]

---

[34] Paul Desenne, program notes (*Las Dos Estaciones (del Trópico Caribeño) / The Two Seasons (of the Caribbean Tropics): Concerto for violin, strings and harpsichord, Invierno / Rainy Season,* 2003), score.

While further exploring Desenne's idea that "music is a cultural phenomenon, not a musical phenomenon,"[35] we uncover an additional layer of a different kind 'baroque', which constitutes a deeply embedded subtext in the *"Two Seasons"* and fuels Desenne's ideological pursuit. According to Desenne, this different kind of 'baroque' stems from the philosophies and writings of Cuban author and musicologist Alejo Carpentier (1904-1980):

> Think of Alejo Carpentier's novels and writings on music. The Cuban novelist in exile worked in Caracas for more than a decade in the 1950s. He developed some wonderful ideas here, expressing a very personal desire of finding the unborn creations of Caribbean baroque and classical musical history. The masterpiece of his imagination is his final *Concierto Barroco*, a short novel of the early 1970s where he connects popular musicians from Latin America with Vivaldi, ending in a Venetian jam session that spurs our imagination. This is the starting point of the "Two Seasons". This violin concerto is one of several musical essays I have written to complete the Carpenterian project of re-inventing our musical history, without forgetting the idea that time does not exist, or is at least irrelevant, in the tropics.[36]

The remainder of this chapter will focus on unraveling Carpentier's philosophies and writings and how these inspire Desenne's own views and his ideological project to re-invent Latin America's musical identity.

Background on Alejo Carpentier

Carpentier was one of the leading figures in Latin American literature in the 20th century and precursor to its "boom" period,[37] most notably known for his theory of *lo real maravilloso*

---

[35] Hudde and Desenne, "Rupturas," 43. "La música es un fenómeno cultural, no es un fenómeno musical."

[36] Desenne, program notes, score.

[37] The word 'Boom' labels a commercial, political, and artistic impact generated by a group of 20th Century fiction writers during the late fifties and sixties in Latin America. Jose Herbozo, "Kerr, Lucile, and Herrero-Olaizola, eds. *Teaching the Latin American Boom*" (Dissidences: Vol. 8 : Iss. 13, Article 1, 2018), https://digitalcommons.bowdoin.edu/dissidences/vol8/iss13/1 (accessed 25 May 2020).

("the marvelous real")[38] and as an exponent of the Latin American baroque style of writing.[39] As a musicologist, he published an in-depth study on the development of Cuban traditional music, including its fusion of styles and mixture of time periods.[40] The themes, characters, settings, and narrative that Carpentier incorporates into his works demonstrate a thorough exploration and awareness of Afro-Cuban cultural and musical elements.[41] He also interweaves into the fabric of his works an array of social and cultural subjects surrounding Latin America, such as religion, myths, history, virgin natural landscapes, social injustice, music, art, and identity.[42] His extensive travels, especially in France, South America, and Mexico, brought him into contact with some of the most prominent members of the artistic communities of Europe and Latin America during his time.[43] As a result of these enriching and eye-opening experiences, Carpentier sought to re-invent the Latin American literary identity by capitalizing on what he considered the continent's marvelous and baroque essence, thus empowering Latin American authors to embrace and explore its insatiable and unexplored natural, cultural, and historical resources.[44]

A comparison of Desenne's and Carpentier's backgrounds and personal experiences reveals similarities in the ways their artistic lives unfolded. It may explain to some extent the philosophical and ideological connections between the two – especially if one considers the imagination and the expression of art to be profoundly experiential, or, as Desenne describes his musical language, an "accumulation" which leads to creation. The first resemblance lies in the

---

[38] There are different English translations for *lo real maravilloso* across literature, including the erroneous translation as 'magical realism', which refers to a different literary trend. From this point forward, *lo real maravillo* will be referred to as "the marvelous real."

[39] Biography of Alejo Carpentier, http://www.biografiascortas.com/2013/06/biografia-de-alejo-carpentier.html (accessed 18 October 2019).

[40] Alejo Carpentier, *La música en Cuba* (México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1946).

[41] Biography of Alejo Carpentier, https://www.cibercuba.com/bio/escritor/alejo-carpentier (accessed 19 October 2019).

[42] Article on Alejo Carpentier, https://www.lanacion.com.ar/cultura/alejo-carpentier-entre-la-historia-y-el-mito-nid669668 (accessed 21 October 2019).

[43] Biography, Carpentier, https://www.cibercuba.com/bio/escritor/alejo-carpentier

[44] Biography, https://www.cibercuba.com/bio/escritor/alejo-carpentier

fact that both artists come from tri-cultural households, sharing a French ancestry and a Latin American heritage: Carpentier had French and Russian parents who lived in Cuba, and Desenne comes from French and North-American parents living in Venezuela. Moreover, both families shared a deep appreciation for music and a diverse history of relatives who were also musicians. Both Carpentier and Desenne experienced living in France during their formative years and coming in contact with innovative artists of their time, which enriched their identities as artists and helped shape their own visions as well as develop a deeper understanding of their Latin American cultural and musical heritage. In Carpentier's life, these artists were representative of the European literary and musical vanguard in the thirties; in Desenne's case, these experiences particularly refer to the invaluable extracurricular training he received while collaborating with musicians from a rich assortment of musical genres and traditions. In both instances, it is clear that while their formal academic education was important, it was this comprehensive and eye-opening informal education, consisting of crucial exchanges of ideas, which truly altered their identity and vision as Latin American artists.

Their multi-faceted artistic pursuits constitute another point for comparison, as both Carpentier and Desenne careers demonstrate an active engagement in a variety of creative mediums. In addition to being a consummate writer well-known for his novels, Carpentier was a musician and also worked in radio, theater, academic essays, opera, and libretto;[45] Desenne, an accomplished cellist and sagacious writer, has worked as newspaper columnist, essayist, political-satirical radio presenter, and actor, though he is most recognized for his musical compositions. This versatility and commitment to different kinds of creative expression are evidence of their shared concern for subjects relevant to any society, leading to a plurality of themes reflected in

[45] Biography, Carpentier, https://www.cibercuba.com/bio/escritor/alejo-carpentier

their artistic content – history, culture, music, art, religion, myths, social issues, all interwoven into the fabric of their compositions.

Carpentier's baroque and "the marvelous real"

On May 22, 1975 at the Athenaeum in Caracas, Venezuela, Alejo Carpentier gave a lecture presenting his ideas regarding the baroque and "the marvelous real" in Latin America, which would be transcribed and published as an essay in 1981.[46] In his address, Carpentier starts by questioning the dictionary definition of the term "baroque." He claims that the conventional definitions of the word unfavorably attribute it a quality of pure decadence and erroneously limit its extent to a specific historical period and geographic location. Carpentier proposes that the word "baroque" should encompass "something multiple, diverse, and enormous that surpasses the work of a single architect or a single Baroque artist".[47] He attempts to redefine the historical and geographic connotations of the term to describe a universal aesthetic rather than a 17th and 18th century European trend. This universality is tied to a sense of timelessness which Carpentier draws from a 19th-century examination of the same term by Eugenio d'Ors[48] which proposes that "what the baroque displays is, in fact, a kind of creative impulse that recurs cyclically throughout history in artistic forms, be they literary or visual, architectural or musical… a *human constant.*"[49] D'Ors' idea of the baroque as a human constant supports Carpentier's belief that "there is an eternal return of the baroque in art through the ages, and this baroque, far from signifying

---

[46] Published in Spanish in Alejo Carpentier, *La novela latinoamericana en vísperas de un nuevo siglo* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1981), "Lo barroco y lo real maravilloso," pp. 111-32.

[47] Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, editors. "Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community" (Duke University Press, 1995), 89.

[48] Eugenio d'Ors (1882-1954) was a Spanish writer, essayist, journalist, philosopher, art critic, and promoter of the movement known as "Novecentismo." http://www.spainisculture.com/en/artistas_creadores/eugenio_d_ors.html (accessed 10 May 2019). d'Ors is the author of the book *Lo barroco*; Carpentier references ideas from this book in his lecture on the baroque as universal and timeless style.

[49] Zamora and Faris, "Magical Realism," 91.

decadence, has at times represented the culmination, the maximum expression and the richest moment of a given civilization."[50] Carpentier uses architecture as his primary metaphor, highlighting what he considers are prevalent baroque attributes in a number of architectural zeniths from around the world and different time periods. A common quality which these culturally diverse designs share and Carpentier identifies as 'baroque' is that they exude "art in motion, a pulsating art, an art that moves outward and away from the center, that somehow breaks through its own borders;"[51] they embody a *baroque spirit* rather than a *historical style*. Carpentier suggests that this baroque spirit already existed in America even before the European Baroque landed on its shores, and that a new American baroque aesthetic and a new identity of the self, the *criollo*,[52] was born of the process of cultural hybridization, the *mestizaje*[53] which followed the colonization:

> Neither the Romanesque nor the Gothic arrived in America. What did arrive was the Plateresque, a type of Baroque, though perhaps with more atmosphere – with more elegance, let's say – than the Churrigueresque Baroque. Ah! But when the Spanish Plateresque arrives in the ships of the conquerors, what does the craftsman who knows the secrets of the Spanish Plateresque find? An Indian work force that, having already built and sculpted and painted with baroque spirit, adds to the Spanish Plateresque its New World baroque materials, baroque imagination, baroque zoological motifs, baroque botanical motifs and floral motifs, and so we reached the heights of glory of baroque architecture, the American baroque … Why is Latin America the chosen territory of the baroque? Because all symbiosis, all *mestizaje*, engenders the baroque. The American baroque develops along with *criollos* culture, with the meaning of *criollo*, with the self-awareness of the American man, be he the son of a white European, the son of a black African or an Indian born on the continent – something admirably noted by Simón Rodríguez: the awareness of being Other, of being new, of being symbiotic, of being a *criollo*; and the *criollo* spirit is itself a baroque spirit. America, a continent of symbiosis, mutations, vibrations, *mestizaje*, has always been baroque.[54]

---

[50] Zamora and Faris, 91.

[51] Zamora and Faris, 93.

[52] The word *criollo* refers to the racial and cultural mixing that produces new cultures. It translates as "creole" in English, but in the United States, this term might suggest the Louisiana culture. Translators' notes, Zamora and Faris, "Magical Realism," 108.

[53] The word *mestizaje* refers to the process of mixture of different races. In Latin America, it includes people of Caucasian, Indigenous, and African descent.

[54] Zamora and Faris, 99-100.

In addition to the explicit presence of the Baroque as a historical style, Desenne's musical language is permeated with this additional layer of baroque, which Carpentier describes as a timeless and boundless creative energy, a baroque spirit. Informed by Carpentier's vision, Desenne embraces and aims to portray through his music the multicultural nature of the Latin American musical identity by giving musical expression to the collage that is the *criollo* culture, uninhibited by sumptuously ornamented melodies, complex textures, and motivic transfigurations that challenge the imagination. The idea of a rich and expansive baroque essence converges with Carpentier's philosophy of "the marvelous real," a concept which alludes to the existence of seemingly implausible yet real and extraordinary natural, cultural, and historical elements in Latin America and which inspires Desenne's musical content.

Carpentier was the first to conceptualize "the marvelous real" literary movement in the prologue to his novel *El reino de este mundo* in 1949. In his writings he establishes an important distinction between "the marvelous real" and literary trends such as magical realism and surrealism, for which his theory is often mistaken. The author explains that the latter two trends rarely look for what is marvelous in reality – magical realism depicts magical or implausible elements in a realistic manner,[55] while surrealism portrays a premeditated fabrication of the marvelous and not that which is found in reality.[56] On the other hand, the marvelous real looks for what already exists and is marvelous or extraordinary; it does not have to be beautiful or ugly but awe-inspiring by virtue of its strangeness and disregard for fixed rules or conventions. According to Carpentier, "everything strange, everything amazing, everything that eludes established norms is marvelous."[57] In particular, Carpentier refers to the untapped resources of the marvelous real

---

[55] Background on *Lo Real Maravilloso*, https://www.ecured.cu/Real_Maravilloso (accessed 10 October 2019).

[56] Zamora and Faris, "Magical Realism," 103.

[57] Zamora and Faris, 101.

found in Latin America's natural landscape, history, and cultural amalgamation, "encountered in its raw state, latent and omnipresent, in all that is Latin American."[58]

The idea of the marvelous real is reflected in Desenne's musical language in the "Two Seasons" in that it is fueled by elements from a complex process of cultural hybridization as well as natural phenomena particular to Latin America and how these are experienced in the human world. Desenne colloquially refers to this hybridization as Latin America's cultural "soup," which in his opinion represents an abundant potential source of creative material with endless possibilities for Latin American composers to reimagine and reinvent an overlooked musical past. This outlook aligns with Carpentier's philosophy that the marvelous real and the baroque in Latin America meet to provide an inexhaustible creative reservoir that nourishes a newfound Latin American cultural and artistic identity. Regarding this hybrid cultural patrimony and the state of musical composition in Latin America, Desenne states: "These are influences which have come to us and are defining factors. No composer has ever truly worked on how these languages can be recombined. It has been done in subtle and trivial ways, and with a beautiful aesthetic always in mind. We, arrangers and composers, are guilty of the great sin of the beautiful." Desenne's perspective also embodies Carpentier's idea that all that is marvelous does not have to be beautiful, it is simply extraordinary and strange. This new understanding of the untapped potential of Latin America's cultural legacy will allow Latin American composers to depart from Eurocentric structures and conventions and reinvent their musical identity. A clear example of how Carpentier makes use of the Latin America's baroque and marvelous realities is his novel *Concierto Barroco*, which Desenne describes as the origin of the "Two Seasons."

---

[58] Zamora and Faris, 104.

Carpentier's novel *Concierto Barroco*

Carpentier's novel *Concierto Barroco* (1974) explicitly alludes to musical elements and rhetoric, allowing him to reflect and elaborate on his vision of a renewed Latin American cultural identity.[59] The novel is based on *Montezuma,* [60] an opera by Antonio Vivaldi premiered in Venetia in 1733. The story begins in Mexico in the 18th century with overflowing baroque sentences bestowed in a rhythmic and melodic tone. A wealthy Mexican *criollo*[61] whose name remains undisclosed and his Cuban servant of African descent named Filomeno embark on a transatlantic voyage from the New World Latin American lands to the Old World European realms to acquaint themselves with the master's proud ancestry. Astonished and enlivened by the Christmas Carnival in Venice, the master partakes in the celebrations by wearing a mask of Montezuma while Filomeno wears none. They then stumble upon three raucous Baroque composers – Vivaldi, Handel and Scarlatti, who are also engaged in the festivities. The master's impressive stories of his Spanish ancestors' brave conquest of Mexico inspire Vivaldi to write the opera *Motezuma*,[62] loosely based on the Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortez's victory over the Aztec ruler Montezuma. Upon the suggestion of the 'red priest', they continue the celebrations privately

[59] Background on Alejo Carpentier's "Concierto Barroco," https://www.ecured.cu/Concierto_barroco (accessed 18 October 2019).

[60] Vivaldi uses a variant spelling of the *Montezuma*, the name of the ninth ruler of the Aztec Empire during whose reign the Europeans first made contact with the indigenous civilizations of Mesoamerica.

[61] In the context of this novel, a person from Spanish South or Central America, especially one of pure Spanish descent. S.v. "Criollo." In *Oxford Dictionary of English*, edited by Angus Stevenson (Oxford University Press, 2010), https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780199571123.001.0001/m_en_gb0191180 (accessed 14 October 2019).

[62] Carpentier writes his *Concierto Barroco* based on a true story in Paris in 1936; he found out through his friend, Italian composer Francesco Malipiero that they had just discovered the score to an opera Vivaldi wrote regarding the American conquest. In "Juego, símbolo y fiesta en *Concierto Barroco* de Alejo Carpentier, una mirada desde la música" by Carlos Paz Barahona (Filología y Lingüística XXXI (1): 71-78, 2005).

at the *Ospedale della Pietà*[63] where they have a *concerto grosso*[64] jam session with the young women at the orphanage and Vivaldi on strings, Scarlatti and Handel on keyboards, and Filomeno adding an African flavor with percussion instruments made of improvised kitchen utensils. The baroque composers are in awe of Filomeno's rhythmic and improvisatory skills and let him have a 32-bar solo.

The next morning, as they all have breakfast by a cemetery, they see Stravinsky's grave and then spot Wagner's funeral procession; Vivaldi and Handel criticize Stravinsky's works for being antiquated and using old material. The Mexican master and Filomeno suddenly wake up at the dress rehearsal for Vivaldi's *Motezuma*. After watching the premier of the opera, the master is confused and enraged by the inaccuracy of Vivaldi's fictional take on his tales; in their arguments, Vivaldi supports the poetic illusion in service of the art, while the master supports historical facts. The master decides to return to his homeland with a newfound sense of reality and appreciation for his true *criollo* identity. However, Filomeno, enthralled by the place and its music, decides to stay behind in fantastical Venice.[65] After the master and servant say goodbye, Filomeno heads to hear a concert by jazz trumpeter Louis Armstrong.

Carpentier's multi-layered, ornamented, and maze-like fantasy resembles the world of Desenne's concerto – both authors insistently and cleverly reimagine the norms and escape fixed structures through satire, insinuations, and transfigurations, which are meant to redefine and reclaim elements of the Latin American musical identity.

---

[63] Venetian orphanage for girls where Vivaldi was appointed violin teacher, music director, and composer-in-residence.

[64] In Baroque music, a concerto in which a small ensemble of soloists (*concertino*) is contrasted with a larger group (*ripieno*). S.v. "Concerto grosso." In *The Oxford Companion to Music,* edited by Alison Latham (Oxford University Press, 2011), https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780199579037.001.0001/acref-9780199579037-e-1554 (accessed 14 October 2019).

[65] Description of Carpentier's book *Concierto Barroco*, https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-0-933031-12-8 (accessed 10 March 2019).

Intertextuality between Carpentier's *Concierto Barroco* and Desenne's "Two Seasons"

Concerto Barroco is permeated throughout with an audacious and unapologetic sense of irony that compels the reader to evaluate the characters' conventional and expected social order. This irony is evident in Carpentier's choice not to name the New World master in the book's entirety, who looks at the Old World in search for his essence. Instead, Carpentier juxtaposes him with a Black servant who is named in the book and turns out to be the most astute, resourceful, and celebrated character in the book, thus inverting the expected order.[66] It is this kind of apparent implausibility – a Black servant, with more culture and renown than his master, who surpasses European masters at their game – which becomes reality in Carpentier's view of Latin America and which symbolizes "the marvelous real" in his work. The implied duality in the title of the novel, *Concierto Barroco,* is in itself also representative of this concept of hierarchical irony; on one hand, it alludes to Vivaldi's most well-known and prolific compositional form, and on the other hand, it makes reference to the most epic event of the novel, a transatlantic jam session.[67] This encounter is significant in that it merges two worlds that synchronously influence each other; it puts the New World artist on par with European canonic figures without denying the latter as one of the many pieces that make up the Latin American musical ancestry. This new baroque concert is stripped of the expected European cultural supremacy and acknowledges the originality and inventiveness that the New World contributes to the mix.

A similar duality and irony can be found in the title Desenne's "Two Seasons" – it acknowledges Latin America's Baroque musical roots by referencing Vivaldi's "Four Seasons," his most celebrated concerto, and at the same time, it reinvents the same concept through the enriched and multilayered perspective of a Latin American artist. In other words, Desenne aims to

---

[66] Carpentier's *Concierto Barroco*, https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-0-933031-12-8 (accessed 10 March 2019).

[67] The Spanish word "concierto" has a dual meaning; it refers to both the musical form or *concerto,* and also a concert or public performance.

write not a Vivaldian "Baroque" concerto, but a Carpentierian "baroque" concerto, which transcends European structures and embodies all of Latin America's marvelous musical reality. In his dissertation regarding the composer's "contemporary musical hybridization," Rondón concludes that Desenne "contemplates Latin America as one entity, united by a rich code of musical languages."[68] Hudde expands on this idea and states that this new route that Desenne takes with his music "does not pretend to be 'exotic'; on the contrary, it is a cultural result such is the music of Palestrina, Monteverdi, Bach, Beethoven, Debussy, Verdi, Schubert, Schönberg or Stravinsky."[69] Desenne takes Renaissance and Baroque musical traditions and fuses them with African and pre-Hispanic ones to create a language which is inherently diverse because of its intrinsic hybridity, and not a Western language infused with extraneous influences.

Carpentier infuses his story with a bizarre yet intentional mixing of historical time periods and musical genres, reframing and challenging our perception of the musical figures involved and any preconceived notions attached to them. In *Concierto Barroco*, we see this back and forth mixing of musical genres, styles, and time periods in a number of different ways. For example, we are presented with the juxtaposition of Latin American and European artists, when the black Cuban servant Filomeno takes part in an impromptu concerto grosso session with Vivaldi, Handel, and Scarlatti. We become aware of an equalization of talent and hierarchy reversal when Filomeno plays a long rhythmic improvisation within a Baroque structure and dazzles the European masters, who express their enthusiastic admiration for the Latin American musician's outstanding skills. The key element in this musical exchange is that, although Filomeno's improvisation has its roots in the Baroque tradition, it has been transformed and

---

[68] Tulio Jose Rondón, "Cultural hybridization in the music of Paul Desenne: An integration of Latin American folk, pop and indigenous music with Western classical traditions" (Doctoral dissertation, University of Arizona, 2005), 86.

[69] Hudde and Desenne, "Rupturas," 58. "[Desenne ha tomado una nueva ruta...] no es ni pretende ser "exotica;" sino todo lo contrario, ésta es un resultado cultural como lo es la música de Palestrina, Monteverdi, Bach, Beethoven, Debussy, Verdi, Schubert, Schönberg o Stravinsky."

enriched by the cultural amalgamation of the New World, resulting in a *mestizo* tradition which preserves its baroque spirit while challenging and exceeding European conventions and structures. During this bizarre baroque jam session, the defying mixture of musical styles is reinforced by the humorous combination of European Baroque period instruments with Filomeno's African-style percussion improvised from kitchen utensils, a depiction which capitalizes on the Latin American artist's creativity and resourcefulness. Throughout the course of his novel Carpentier liberally evokes European Baroque period instruments, Latin American instruments of indigenous and African descent, and instruments that are the direct product of Latin America's cultural hybridization. We witness the same mischievous treatment and mixture of time periods, genres, and musical instruments in Desenne's "Two Seasons," as he alternates between musical languages – Baroque and contemporary, classical and traditional, urban and folk, tango and jazz – and mixes Baroque and modern classical instruments which in return imitate and evoke the sounds of folk instruments and nature. Moreover, the imaginative way in which Desenne quotes and transforms motivic material and musical gestures from Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" is reminiscent of the ingenious and humorous way in which the servant Filomeno takes the Baroque solo in the impromptu concerto grosso and reinvents it into something complex and completely novel.

This non-linear dialogue between the old and the new, which both Carpentier and Desenne expertly manipulate, challenges the way Western culture has historically subjugated Latin American culture. Instead of fitting into predetermined molds, the authors reclaim and reinvent these models through improvisation, innovation, and a continuous revitalization in a way that gives voice to the rich cultures that merged in Latin America. In his analysis and interpretation of the musical forms present in Carpentier's *Concierto Barroco* from a jazz perspective, Kyle Matthews describes this dialogue as "the extraordinary capacity of the New World to recolonize the Old through a reinvigoration of its artistic forms" and a process which

"privileges cultural cross-pollination over transplantation, and syncretism over appropriation."[70] Matthews adds a powerful statement to his analysis, which directly relates to Carpentier's rewriting of Latin America's history and cultural relationship with Europe:

> Rather than inverting the old hegemony and establishing Europe as culturally beholden to the Americas, he instead indicates the foundation for a new intercultural syncretism. He refers to Armstrong's concert in Europe not as uniquely American, neither an invasion nor a cultural appropriation, but as the result of organic, transatlantic cross-pollination, by way of jazz's European, Baroque and afro-Caribbean roots … The continual subversion and reinvigoration of European musical forms —in particular old, Baroque European musical forms, such as the concerto grosso—, through contact with American elements allows Carpentier to construct a compelling metaphor for the vitality and remarkable originality of the New World freed from the hegemonic constraints of the Old, able not only to inject new life into stale and inflexible hierarchies, but to contribute fresh growth to a stagnant cultural system no longer adequate to deal with syncretic, transatlantic realities.[71]

Just as compellingly as *Concerto Barroco*, the "Two Seasons" exudes this kind of historical, cultural, and musical syncretism; it does not pretend to deny the European influences on Latin America's musical vocabulary or take a nationalistic stance in favor of folk traditions, but it rethinks outdated structures. Through the suggestion of a renewed, invigorated, and egalitarian account of the cultural exchange between the Old and New Worlds in their works, Desenne and Carpentier succeed in reclaiming and redefining Latin American cultural narrative. The artful and persuasive process through which they present this necessary and inevitable historical perspective is facilitated by an uninhibited temporal and stylistic exchange of ideas that leads to a vindication of Latin American music and its role within the Western-dominated realm of art music.

A distinct point of interconnection between *Concierto Barroco* and the "Two Seasons." is that both works find their inspiration in compositions by Vivaldi – the opera *Motezuma* and the

---

[70] Kyle Matthews, "Baroque Jazz: Toward a New Understanding of Musical Form in Carpentier's Concierto Barroco" (Latin American Literary Review, Volume 44 / Number 87, 2017), 2.

[71] Matthews, "Baroque Jazz," 6.

"Four Seasons," respectively; each of these works serve as the central axis in both Carpentier's novel and Desenne's concerti, although not in the way we would expect. Upon initial examination, Vivaldi's pieces appear to be the center of attention, the pillars from which all the other elements emanate. However, Carpentier's philosophical context suggests the role of Vivaldi's presence as tools to symbolize an underlying subtext. In *Concierto Barroco*, Vivaldi's inaccurate and parodying depiction of the story of Monctezuma serves as the Mexican master's moment of realization in his process of self-discovery – after what he considers a disrespectful and exploiting retelling of Mexico's history, he ceases looking up to and looking in Europe for his identity; instead, he realizes that his identity was in the New World after all. Vivaldi's fictional take on the Latin America's history is illustrated in Desenne's own words: "Latin American culture is, for various reasons (one of them being the period during which the Spanish conquest took place), a layered, multi-faceted, complicated baroque pearl, the true value of which is not easy to appraise from afar."[72] In the "Two Seasons," the reference to Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" and the way Desenne reinvents the same concept to depict Latin America as a whole can also be seen as a process of self-discovery of the Latin American musical identity. Desenne's telling and fusion of Latin America's musical past and present comes across as a creative and unrestrained amplification of the jam session between Filomeno and the European maestros.

The journey that the *criollo* Mexican master experiences in order to arrive at the realization of his own Latin American identity could also be compared to Carpentier's and Desenne's own personal journeys. It often requires leaving one's country and observing it from the outside to yearn for and fully comprehend its culture, as well as to realize its potentiality. The author and composer have both expressed that living in Europe enriched their understanding and appreciation for Latin America's cultural heritage as well as its perception in the world stage.

---

[72] Desenne, program notes, score.

Their experiences directly and irreversibly influenced their artistic and philosophical views, and it instilled in them a desire to reclaim and reinvent Latin America's musical history. With a newfound sense of identity and broader understanding of the world, both Carpentier and Desenne are in advantageous positions to depict and advocate for Latin America's cultural and musical traditions in a Western-dominated society. As part of this process, their works and writings question Eurocentric models and embolden Latin American artists and institutions to disrupt the status quo.

Reinventing Latin America's musical identity

In his lecture describing the baroque and "the marvelous real" in Latin America, Carpentier suggests that these untapped realities require a new artistic language that is uniquely informed by the perspective of the Latin American artist.[73] He argues that not only are these an immeasurable source of inspiration, but their depiction is the artistic responsibility of the Latin American artist:

> If our duty is to depict this world, we must uncover and interpret it ourselves. Our reality will appear new to our own eyes. Description is inescapable, and the description of a baroque world is necessarily baroque, that is, in this case the *what* and the *how* coincide in a baroque reality. I cannot construct a so-called classical or academic description of an *árbol de la vida* from Oaxaca. I have to create with my words a baroque style that parallels the baroque of the temperate, tropical landscape. And we find that this leads logically to a baroque that arises spontaneously in our literature.[74]

Through this new and uniquely Latin American language, Carpentier empowers Latin American artists to take ownership of our bizarre multicultural inheritance: "As far as the marvelous real is concerned, we have only to reach out our hands to grasp it. We have forged a language appropriate to the expressions of our realities, and the events that await us will find that

[73] Zamora and Faris, "Magical Realism," 105.
[74] Zamora and Faris, 106.

we, the novelists of Latin America, are the witnesses, historians, and interpreters of our great Latin American reality."[75] This call to action not only compels Latin American authors to look inwards at the exuberance and intensity of Latin America's history and culture; it implies a disengagement from perpetuating European models and constricting trends of looking outwards for inspiration and validation. In his program notes for the "Two Seasons," Desenne describes a similar perspective regarding the Latin American musical language and the possibilities it poses for composers:

> Since we are here immersed in this complex multi-layered baroque language, a realm of music where expression is one step beyond sentimentalism, channeled into codes of rhetoric and civilized by form, it is quite natural for many composers in Latin America to feel that we haven't exhausted the possibilities of this language; it allows us to set, in a sort of universal droit de cité, every possible regional genre of music – a Concert des Nations Caraïbes.[76]

Desenne's view on the potential of Latin America's hybrid musical language is reinforced by his belief in the vastness of its historical and cultural resources, which he presents as a powerful incitement for Latin American musicians which is consonant with Carpentier's call to arms and his vision of the marvelous real:

> Latin America is the largest repository of musical energy. What gives the continent a very special touch in regards to music is the coexistence of diverse active and historical layers; simultaneously with the superposition, mixture and collision of cultures, which mass media nor centralism have been able to reduce or control. Hundreds of genres, scopes of subcultures with common codes, put Latin America in the forefront of the world's music stage. Together, composers and performers of the new Latin- American concert music should share the excitement and endeavor to bring these stimulating sounds and expressions to audiences who are asking for a true renovation in attitude and musical intensity."[77]

---

[75] Zamora and Faris, 107.

[76] Desenne, program notes, score.

[77] Hudde, "Tertulia," 95. "América Latina es el más grande repositorio de energía musical. Lo que le da un toque muy especial al continente en la música es la coexistencia de diversas capas activas e históricas; simultáneamente con la superposición, mezcla y colisión de culturas, las cuales ni los medios de comunicación ni el centralismo han sido capaces de reducir y controlar. Centenares de géneros, subculturas en ámbitos con códigos comunes, colocan a América Latina al frente del scenario musical mundial. Juntos, compositores e intérpretes de la nueva música de concierto latinoamericana deben compartir la emoción y

When asked his opinion about Venezuelan compositions and composers and the status of Latin American composers within the Western classical music canon, Desenne points out historic and systemic flaws in the relationship between classical and traditional music, resulting in a hindered Latin American musical identity: "Art music [in Latin America] reflects the frustration of the dominant classes, and even that of the middle class, which sought to implant European culture in Latin America and subsequently tried to create a regional identity which they could not ensure through this European art music."[78] Desenne considers Venezuela to have one of the most interesting legacies of musical hybridization in the form of traditional instruments, like the Venezuelan harp and guitar, and its folk musicians.[79] This musical tradition has been passed down and transformed orally through generations, and they are a testament to virtuosity, improvisation, technical prowess, creativity, and complexity. Evidence of the marvelous real in the Latin American musical realm, these creations have not been written down on staff paper, and many of the musicians have not been formally trained; yet, they surpass many classically-trained composers in their ability to reflect a syncretic culture. Desenne criticizes the ingrained tendency of many Venezuelan academic composers to look for inspiration and validation elsewhere, writing in outdated and extrinsic genres, harmonies, and forms – a Eurocentric trend which Carpentier also condemns in literature, ignoring the wealth of inspiration and material in Latin America's fusion of musical traditions.[80]

In addition to urging Latin American artists to wield the resources available to them and explore their own potential, Carpentier and Desenne also criticize the systems that are meant to

---

el proyecto de llevar estos sonidos estimulantes y estas expresiones a las audiencias que piden una verdadera renovación en la actitud y en la intensidad musical."

[78] Hudde, "Tertulia," 107. "La música de concierto refleja la frustración de las clases dominantes, e incluso de las clases medias, que buscaron implantar la cultura europea en Latinoamérica y que buscaron posteriormente crear una identidad regional que no pudieron quizás afianzar a través de esta música europea de concierto."

[79] Hudde, "Tertulia," 104.

[80] Hudde, "Tertulia," 104.

support and foment artistic expression, holding them accountable for the lack of a bold, cohesive, and sustainable musical identity that is representative of Latin America's multicultural reality. To locate the crux of this issue, in his lecture Carpentier contrasts the meaning of the word "baroque" with the concept of "classicism," quoting the latter term's dictionary definition: "*Classicism:* Literary or artistic system, based on the imitation of the Greek and Roman models" or, paraphrased in his own words, "that which *copies* Roman and Greek models."[81] From this interpretation of the term 'classicism', Carpentier infers that "all *imitation* is academic, so all academies are governed by rules, norms, and laws. Classicism is academic, and all that is academic is conservative, vigilant, obedient, and therefore declared enemy of innovation, of anything that breaks rules and norms."[82] This deduction further supports his interpretation of what is and what is not baroque, which then leads to his strongest criticism against academicism – that it is "characteristic of settled times that are complete, sure of themselves. The baroque, on the other hand, arises where there is transformation, mutation or innovation."[83] Desenne shares a similar sentiment towards academicism in regards to the counterproductive stance academia has historically adopted in the defining of a syncretic Latin American musical identity, as well as its inaction in supporting and validating the multiculturalism of the Latin American artist.

According to Desenne, academic institutions in Latin America are not inclusive of all the resources available in our multifaceted musical language, and they do not fully foster the creative potential of Latin American musicians by involving the contributions of composers who are "creating music within, or inspired by popular, traditional, hybrid, urban genres, but are nowhere to be seen in the academic spheres."[84] He explains that traditional musicians in Latin America

---

[81] Zamora and Faris, "Magical Realism," 92.
[82] Zamora and Faris, 92.
[83] Zamora and Faris, 98.
[84] Hudde, "Tertulia," 107. "[Hay compositores latinoamericanos extraordinarios] inventando escrituras dentro,o a partir de los géneros populares, tradicionales, híbridos, urbanos, pero no registran presencia en lo académico."

demonstrate boundless creativity and resourcefulness, employing "novel forms of sonorous organization, truly transformative creative procedures which traditional academia has never understood or valued, much less incorporate or integrate."[85] Instead of collaborating with traditional musicians and incorporating their inventiveness, academia has detrimentally chosen to split the traditional music branch of research into Ethnomusicology, which is founded on sociological and historical aspects of music but not necessarily on compositional procedures. Desenne advocates that in order for there to be an inclusive musical discourse in academia that reflects and explains cultural phenomena, there needs to be a collaboration between these fields of research: "We have to revolutionize not only out vision, but also those institutions dedicated to musical and cultural studies. And perhaps, from this point we can begin to understand the relationship between our Latin American musical traditions – which are many and very rich – and new forms of urban concert music."[86] In Desenne's opinion, this lack of support, cooperation, and integration between traditional and academic music composition is not unique to Latin America: "The truth is that the barrier of prejudices which separates academic music from other types of music in France has condemned even their own French traditional music, of any kind, to an unimaginable impoverishment and professional discredit."[87]

The lack of not only institutional but also financial support is equally responsible for the absence of a culture of collaboration between popular and academic musicians, thwarting a bridge

---

[85] Hudde, "Tertulia," 108. "[Hay un cosmos de creadores de música tradicional, de forma surbanas o semiurbanas y no tienen vínculo con la academia. Son totalmente extraacadémicos, inventan a la manera de Duke Ellington –gracias a la escritura–] formas novedosas de organización sonora, procedimientos creativos realmente transformadores que la academia tradicional nunca logró entender o valorar, mucho menos incorporar o asimilar."

[86] Hudde, "Tertulia," 108. "Nosotros tenemos que revolucionar no solamente nuestra visión, sino los centros donde se plantean los estudios musicales y culturales. Y tal vez, a partir de ahí podamos entender una relación entre nuestras tradiciones musicales de Latinoamérica –que son muchas y muy ricas– con las nuevas formas urbanas de concierto."

[87] Hudde, "Tertulia," 101. "Lo cierto es que la barrera de prejuicios que separa la música académica de las otras, en Francia, ha condenado hasta a la propia música tradicional francesa, de cualquier clase, a un empobrecimiento y un descrédito profesional inimaginables."

between composers and performers, written and oral traditions. According to Desenne, there are traditional musicians whose technique and artistry would be revered by classical music standards, but they choose to remain in the "popular" music world because of the lack of financial and institutional support as well as exposure.[88] In his interview with Herman Hudde, Desenne encourages the reader to imagine the marvels of what a traditional musician, well versed in popular music, might create with a medium such as that of art music, especially considering that "art music provides a stage for the amplification and development of the musical imagination of a community and culture."[89]

Historically, much of Latin American classical music has endured a position of inferiority next to its European counterpart or sought to fit into its standards in return for academic, artistic, or institutional validation. This mentality has unfortunately been ingrained and gone unquestioned in our society from its beginnings, and many 20th-century Latin American composers have struggled to establish a voice that is independent from Western theories and trends as well as equitably regarded in the concert halls. Desenne's ideas, enriched by Carpentier's philosophies, endeavor to emancipate Latin American art music and its perception from this limiting mindset; but for this process to succeed, it has to be endorsed and implemented at every institutional level. According to Hermann Hudde, this lack of support "creates the impression that the art music composed by Latin American composers is an aleatory coincidence and not the result of a cultural and artistic process by the continent's composers, as well as evidence of the expansion of Western classical music's canon."[90] The systematic support for a renewed perspective and

---

[88] Hudde, "Tertulia," 104.

[89] Hudde, "Tertulia," 105. "La música de concierto te proporciona un escenario de amplificación y desarrollo para el imaginario musical de un pueblo y una cultura."

[90] Hudde and Desenne, "Rupturas," 58. "[Esta deficiencia] genera la impresión de que la música de concierto creada por los compositores latino-americanos es una casualidad aleatoria y no el resultado de un proceso artístico-cultural por parte de los compositores del continente, así como una muestra de la expansión del canon de la música clásica occidental."

exploration of Latin America's syncretic culture would result in a fertile bridging of traditions, and thus, a reinvention and reassertion of its musical identity.

Intertextuality between Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" and Desenne's "Two Seasons"

One of the most distinguishing aspects of the "Two Seasons" is its reference to Vivaldi's "Four Seasons," one of Desenne's key inspirations in the conception of his work. There are apparent ways in which the two sets of concerti parallel each other, the most evident of them being the choice of instrumentation, both scored for solo violin, strings, and harpsichord, and their concerto form. A defining common trait is their programmatic nature, each giving musical expression to the experience of the seasons respective to their geographical location; they aim to portray this experiential context through the textual and affective content of the music. This context involves the depiction of not only the seasons in a literal sense, but most importantly, culture-specific extra-musical events related to the effects of nature on human life and the emotions they evoke. In terms of compositional devices, motivic figuration and sequential development lavishly permeate both works. Additionally, Desenne makes extensive use musical borrowing and quotations from the "Four Seasons," both common Baroque techniques. The next chapter will examine specific borrowed motifs and the innovative ways in which Desenne transfigures them and recontextualize them to serve the specific musical narrative of the "Two Seasons."

These shared conceptual and structural Baroque elements can be seen as an homage to the Baroque composer and as recognition of the role Baroque music holds in Latin America's syncretic musical identity. However, they also represent an opportunity for Desenne to reimagine the Baroque aesthetics from a culturally and historically enriched perspective, thus breaking with stylistic conventions and hierarchical perceptions. From this viewpoint, an underlying creative, virtuosic, and mischievous disobedience comes to light in the tone of the "Two Seasons." For

example, the mixture of modern stringed instruments with the harpsichord is symbolic of the exchange between past and present traditions to create a new musical reality. The title the "Two Seasons" inherently challenges preconceived notions of the seasons, captivatingly adapted to indicate the seasons in the Caribbean. For instance, the titles of two concertos that comprise the "Two Seasons" (*Invierno*/Rainy Season and *Verano*/Dry Season) invoke a sense of humorous irony and inspire curiosity – especially considering the common assumption that the Caribbean Tropics do not experience the seasons, only soaring temperatures year-round. With this notion in mind, the apparent and humorous incongruence lies in labeling the concerti "Winter" and "Summer," which are generally characterized as cold and hot seasons, respectively. However, Desenne challenges and enlightens this common perception of the seasons by including terms which describe the actual experience of the seasons in the Caribbean Tropics, which has everything to do with the effects of rain and drought rather that with temperature. The immediate juxtaposition of the European and Caribbean seasons and its implicit questioning and fracturing of preconceived notions, along with its clever reinvention, is profoundly symbolic of Desenne's inventive and playful musical language in the "Two Seasons."

The concertos' subtitles and movement titles also defy Western terminology often associated with the concerto genre; Desenne uses colloquial names that allude to uniquely Latin American experiences and events, evoking humor, nostalgia, and devastation. The movement names of the first concerto, which is the analytical focus of this document, reinforce the juxtaposition of Latin American humor and devastation along with the overarching goal to redefine Eurocentric musical concepts and terms to more justly portray a multi-layered Latin American musical identity. The first movement of *Invierno (Rainy Season)* is titled "Goteras," in reference to the roof leaks which rhythmically invade the faulty shanty towns during the rainy season. The second movement is called "Coquiloquio," which Desenne translates as "Frog Assembly;" this title alludes to the unedited soundtrack of busy nocturnal frogs and critters which

invade the Venezuelan scenery during the rainy season. Lastly, the third movement's title, "Wipers Gigavalse / Deslave (Wipers Gigavalse / Landslide)," evokes the sprightly yet relentless oscillation of windshield wipers of cars in the rain and, later, the catastrophic effects of downpours during the most torrential time of the rainy season. All three titles represent Desenne's humoresque take on formal concerto movement titles, suggesting a transformation in the identity of the baroque concerto from a Latin American perspective. Yet, at the same time, these titles carry the weight of devastation brought on by the rainy season and shines a light on certain dark realities in the Caribbean tropics – the poor infrastructure in shanty town settlements, the infestation of non-native species in the ecosystem, and the deadly balance between man and the forces of nature. Despite these bleak revelations, Desenne music capitalizes on the Latin America's tradition of using humor in the face of adversity. In his program notes Desenne explains the region's geographic disposition which affects the very fabric of life in Latin America and shapes the narrative of the "Two Seasons":

> The seasons of the Caribbean tropics are as intense and important as the seasons of temperate climates. The rainy season, which takes place roughly during the summer and autumn of the northern hemisphere, can be extremely annoying, with endless and sometimes devastating rainfall. The dry season comes during the northern Winter and Spring, roughly speaking, and it can be as devastating as the wet season. It usually ends in forest fires, and it is the time when nature's territory shrinks in agony. There is a rather tragic tone in these comments, but now more than ever, the seasons have reached extremes. Our tropical seasons in the Caribbean seem to imitate some features of the northern ones, but upside down. For example, at the height of the dry season at the end of March, most of the coastal forests shed their leaves to save moisture. The skies are grey – a northern Winter scene – but temperatures reach the high thirties (centigrade), and suddenly many flowers bloom. The Winter scene becomes a flower carnival. In Spanish, to keep things upside down in relation to the north, the dry season is called *verano* – summer. The rainy season is called *invierno* – winter – yet it is the greenest; but it can also be the coolest and darkest time of the year, ending in the October and November floods. (The disastrous floods and landslides on the Venezuelan coast in December 1999 took thousands of lives.)[91]

[91] Desenne, program notes, score.

Desenne's "Two Seasons" epitomizes not only a dialogue across classical, folk, and popular musical practices and between past and present traditions, but most notably, the interaction between the human and natural worlds. This imaginative merger of ideas reflects the phenomenological character of his work, which gives musical expression to the cultural and experiential aspects of the seasons in the Caribbean Tropics. Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" provide a familiar musical and conceptual point of reference, but it is Desenne's liberal transformation of this material and its amalgamation with other inherited and contemporary musical traditions that truly define his language and reinvent Latin America's musical history.

Chapter 2: ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW OF DESENNE'S *INVIERNO (RAINY SEASON)*

Figure 1. Venezuelan landscape during the rainy season (winter)
(Photo provided by Desenne on the score)

I. "Goteras (Roof Leaks)"

> Over a melancholy introduction, we hear raindrops falling from leaking roofs into tin cans. It's the endless tropical rain, and the tin and cardboard houses of the shanty towns are soaked; everything is grey and wet. Suddenly a transfigured Vivaldi appears: motives from his *Summer*, first in a 5/8 Venezuelan merengue, then as a tango. A kaleidoscope of Latin styles takes us from the Dominican merengue to the Colombian cumbia, and back to a modern Argentine tango setting in a modulating baroque progression. In Argentine slang, where everything is said backwards, "tango" becomes "gotan," and "gota" is a drop. Tropical rain is dense and melancholic, but it can also be intensely rhythmic like the tango, which comes to us from the deepest south. This opening piece is also a homage to Piazzolla, the creator of the "Seasons" of Buenos Aires – another powerful comment on the same theme from a totally different vantage point. Goteras bows to this previous version of the same idea.[1]

[1] Paul Desenne, program notes (*Las Dos Estaciones (del Trópico Caribeño)* / *The Two Seasons (of the Caribbean Tropics):* Concerto for violin, strings and harpsichord*, Invierno / Rainy Season,* 2003), score.

Based on Desenne's remarks about the first movement of *Invierno*, the central theme of the movement on a permeating and corroding social issue seen in developing countries in Latin America: the profusion of improvised and precarious settlements, a direct result of poverty, and their profound impact on the culture of the region. However, by identifying this issue he also sheds light on the remarkable resourcefulness that results from such hardship. In the face of poorly waterproofed roofs and imminent roof leaks in shantytowns, dwellers resort to imaginative and cost-effective solutions, such as repurposing food and paint metal containers to catch the water slipping through the roof leaks. The determined sound of droplets falling inside tin cans is a part of Venezuela's cultural soundscape during the wet season – both a natural and fabricated soundtrack to rainy days. The ingenious idea of taking this inconspicuous background sound and turning it into the starting point and unifying motif of this movement can be seen as Desenne's commentary on Latin America's culture of resilience and humor when faced with tragedy. The steady and tireless raindrops, initially signifying gloom and underdevelopment, become the pulse to the cheerful and invincible "kaleidoscope of Latin styles."[2] It becomes evident that Desenne's underlying intention in this concerto goes far beyond simply illustrating sounds of nature through his music; he is conveying a collective sentiment brought upon the ruthless and unique seasons in the tropics, and the ways in which people in Latin American fearlessly, creatively, and playfully adapt to these conditions.

When considering the presence and transfiguration of Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" and references to tango and other Latin American styles, the movement can be divided in two stages. The first stage is infused with motivic and conceptual allusions to Vivaldi's *Winter*, and the second is pervaded by transmuted quotations and textural references to Vivaldi's *Summer*. Moreover, the second stage is where Desenne incorporates specific Latin American rhythms,

[2] Desenne, program notes, score.

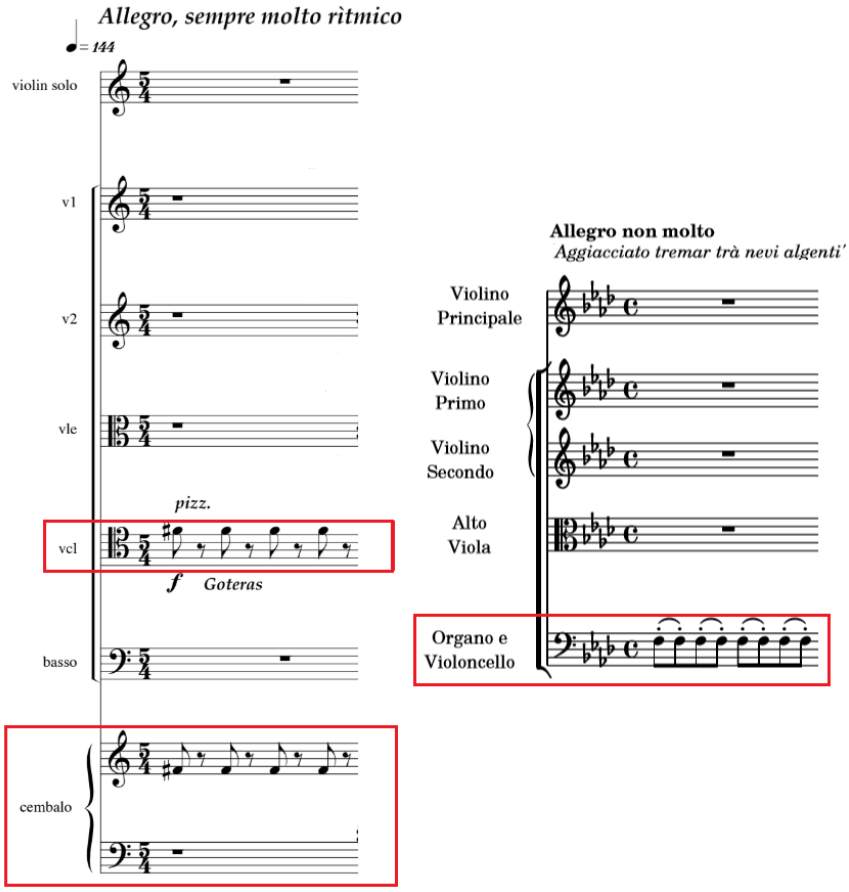
which he mentions in his program notes. The beginning until measure 27 constitutes the first stage of the movement, and it contains deeply embedded motivic and programmatic inspiration from Vivaldi's first and second movements of *Winter* (Allegro non molto and Largo, respectively). Measure 28 until the end of the movement represents stage two, containing a brief quotation from Vivaldi's first movement of *Summer*, numerous quotations from *Summer's* third movement (Presto), and an allusion to Latin American dance rhythms such as Venezuelan merengue, Argentine tango, Dominican merengue, and cumbia. The second stage of the movement, permeated largely with tango allusions, is an homage to Piazzolla's "Four Seasons of Buenos Aires." In this second half, Desenne takes us on a multi-faceted journey – from Europe to Latin America, classical to traditional styles, and the 18th to the 20th century.

Invierno movement opens with a roof-leak motive that not only provides an aural image for the listener but also establishes the first direct analogy between Desenne's movement and Vivaldi's *Winter*. Specifically, the very first four beats of "Goteras" directly quote the first measure of the first movement from Vivaldi's *Winter*. In both cases, the violoncello and cembalo start the movement together with an eighth-note motor while the other voices await their entrance.[3] However, the two beginnings are not notated identically: Vivaldi's is notated *Allegro non molto* in an 4/4 time signature, while Desenne's is notated *Allegro, sempre molto rítmico* in a 5/4 time signature and 144 beats per minute to the quarter note (Example 1). Even though Vivaldi does not provide a metronome marking for the opening of *Winter*, a traditional performance tempo for this movement is approximately 72 beats per minute to the quarter note.[4] Vivaldi's rhythmic ostinato consists of continuous staccato eighth notes, while its counterpart in "Goteras" is made up of an eighth note plus an eighth-note rest grouping per quarter-note pulse. Since the

[3] The continuo part is traditionally played by the organ and /or cembalo in addition to a bowed continuo, such as the cello.

[4] After a survey and comparison of numerous recordings of this movement performed by different artists, this metronome marking represents the approximate average tempo between performances.

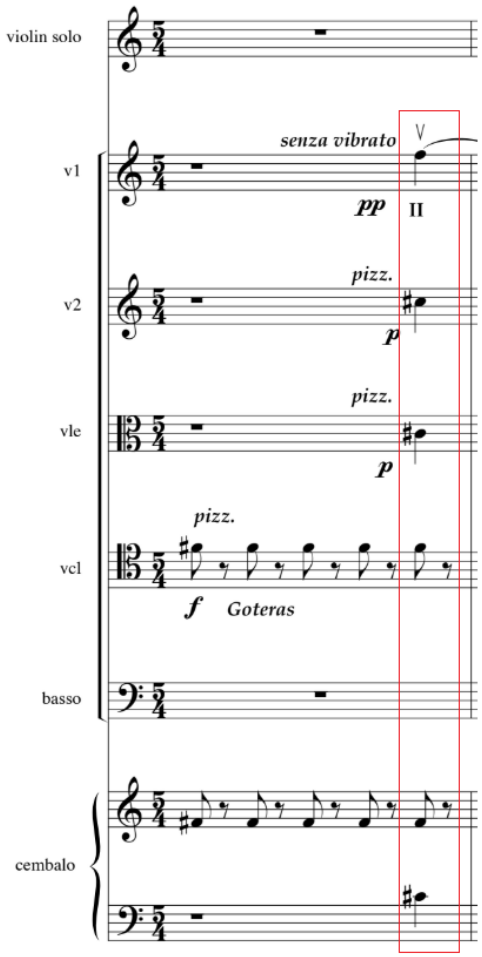
tempo in “Goteras” is approximately twice as fast as the opening of *Winter*, Desenne’s intercalation of eighth-note rests between eighth notes creates the aural perception that both openings are identical in terms of rhythm and tempo. The eighth-note rests also play a role in the perception of articulation as they are meant to emulate the staccato markings on the opening eighth notes in *Winter.* The initial tempo relation between the two works reveals Desenne’s intent to quote Vivaldi not in a literal but a transfigured way, setting the tone in which he will treat Vivaldi’s material for the remainder of the work.



Example 1. Desenne, *Invierno*, “Goteras” (left), m. 1 and Vivaldi, *Winter*, Allegro con molto (mvmt. 1) (right), m. 1

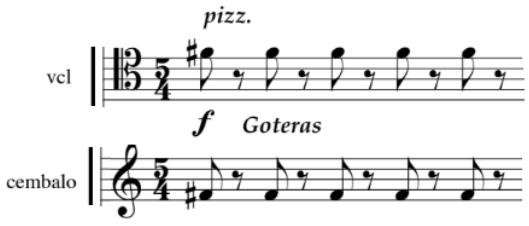
The rhythmic deception continues momentarily when the rest of the voices – except for the solo violin and basso – come in on the fifth beat of the first measure, giving the listener a momentary yet false sense of metric familiarity. Thus far the listener has no aural evidence of a 5/4 meter, so the entrance on the fifth beat is perceived as the downbeat of the second measure of the piece, reaffirming the apparent binary nature of the first four beats of the movement (

Example **2**). The fleeting Vivaldian analogy quickly turns into metric confusion in the second measure as the solo violin comes in with a sinuous melody that distorts any established sense of meter. Nonetheless, the meaning of Desenne's 5/4 compound meter will become aurally clear later in the movement.



Example 2. Desenne, *Invierno*, "Goteras," score, m. 1

The opening cello part is marked *forte* pizzicato and has the word "Goteras" (roof leaks) written under it. This symbolic marking gives the cello a clear role in the texture and also aids the performers in envisioning and executing a type of pizzicato suggestive of Desenne's desired sonority, "raindrops falling from leaking roofs into tin cans."[5] To achieve this effect more vividly, and at the same time reinforce the Vivaldian reference, the relentless cello pizzicato is accompanied in unison by the piercing sound of the cembalo (Example 3). This combination of timbres closely resembles the distinctive aural experience of raindrops falling through leaky corrugated metal roofs of shanty towns or *ranchos* which pervade much of the Venezuelan landscape (see Figure 2). The rest of the instruments play a role in portraying irregularly timed roof leaks, thus creating a densely complex polyrhythmic background. This juxtaposing sense of rhythmic ambiguity is conceived through contrapuntal syncopations and triplets against the regular pulsations of the cello, which constitute a rhythmic ostinato until measure 27 when the first metric transformation and rhythmic transfiguration occurs. Until this point, the combination of intricate syncopations in the upper strings dancing around the cello and cembalo parts, in addition to the instrumental timbre differences, convey a realistic auditory experience that shantytown dwellers encounter as a result of the rainy season's incessant and inevitable corrosion.



Example 3. Desenne, *Invierno,* "Goteras," cello and cembalo parts, m. 1

[5] Desenne, program notes, score.

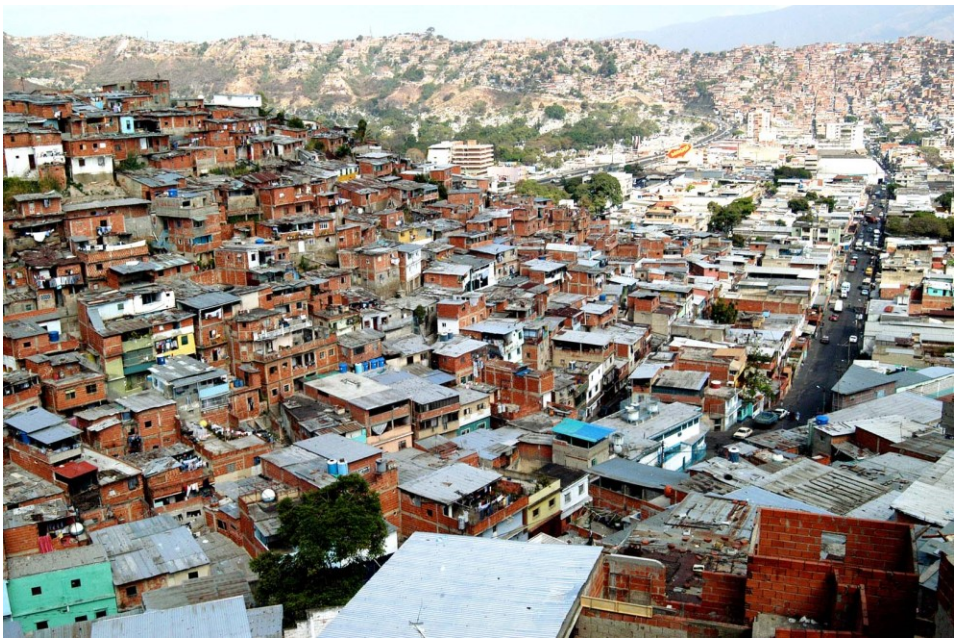
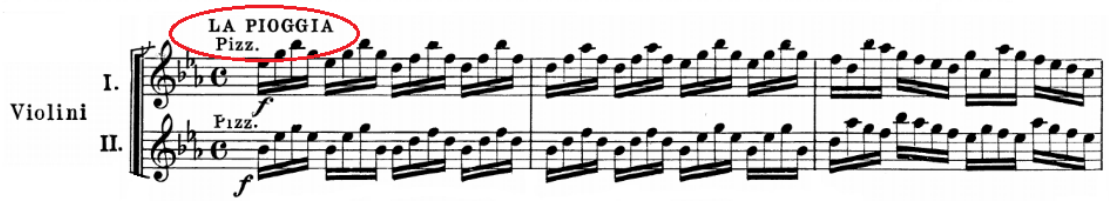


Figure 2. View of shantytowns (*ranchos*) in Caracas, Venezuela

The opening of the movement features yet another hidden reference to Vivaldi, this time a conceptual allusion rather than a textual one. Desenne's indication for the cellos to play pizzicato – unlike the opening of *Winter*, where the cellos plays *arco* – hints at the Largo movement from *Winter*, where the tutti violins have the indication to play sixteen-notes in pizzicato accompanying the solo violin melody (Example 4). The violins parts are marked *La Pioggia,* which translate from Italian as "the rain." This is a subtle yet powerful reference that sets the calm rainy scenery of Vivaldi's *Largo* to the context of the Caribbean rainy season and turns it into the sound of roofleaks, combined with the feeling of despair and uncertainty conveyed in the first movement of *Winter*, the most evident quotation. Additionally, Desenne's choice to write the word "Goteras" on the opening cello part is a satirical reference to Vivaldi's "La Pioggia" marking in *Winter*'s Largo, serving as comparison between two different regions of the world and time periods, and how they each portray forces of nature in their own culturally idiomatic ways.



Example 4. Vivaldi, *Winter*, Largo, tutti violin parts, mm. 1–3

Two additional aspects that both link and distinguish Vivaldi's opening of *Winter* from its transmuted counterpart are pitch and register. In terms of pitch, both works start on the note-letter F; however, Vivaldi starts the cello and cembalo on an F-natural, while Desenne starts them on an F-sharp. Additionally, the latter starts precisely an octave higher than its baroque counterpart, with the cembalo part given to the right hand in treble clef rather than the left hand in bass clef. Another major differentiation is that Vivaldi's *Winter* starts with an explicit F-minor sonority – even though only an F-natural is notated in the continuo part according to the first edition of this work, the custom was to realize or fill in the harmony on the given note in the bass line[6]. Since no figure[7] is indicated in the first measure, the first harmony that the continuo plays is an F-minor chord in root position. Contrastingly, Desenne opts for a *tasto solo* version of this opening, where the continuo does not fill in the rest of the chord but instead only plays the given note –in this case F-sharp– without its implied harmony.[8] Despite the clear Vivaldian reference, Desenne immediately creates an atmosphere of ambiguity, in this case, harmonic transfiguration.

Desenne's choice for higher register and pitch might have more profound implications and further ties to Baroque traditions. With the use of unequal tuning systems before, during, and

---

[6] S.v. "Continuo." In *The Oxford Companion to Music,* edited by Alison Latham (Oxford University Press, 2011), https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780199579037.001.0001/acref-9780199579037-e-1591 (accessed 20 January 2020).

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

after the Baroque period, each key was believed to convey a different affective quality. For example, Christian Schubart's writings on this subject are some of the most quoted throughout history. In his 1806 descriptions of key characteristics, Schubart writes that the key of F minor was meant to convey "deep depression, funereal lament, groans of misery and longing for the grave," and the key of F-sharp minor was "a gloomy key," and "resentment and discontent are its language."[9] As a baroque composer aware of the emotional attributes of keys, Vivaldi may very well have chosen F minor for the first movement of *Winter* to convey the seasonal depression experienced during extreme cold. A more appropriate expression of gloom and discontent in the Caribbean during the rainy season – not as severe as the cold season – is the historical meaning associated with the key of F-sharp minor, which Desenne momentarily hints at in the opening of "Goteras." With formal studies on Baroque cello and experience with historical performance practice of Baroque music, Desenne acknowledges his awareness of Vivaldi's affective choice of key by adapting his own to the distinct sentiments that overcome the Caribbean Tropics during its winter, or rainy season. This potential intertextual relationship of keys (F-natural and F-sharp) has a more surface-level motivic aspect, too: consider the way the melancholic melody of the solo violin often swerves back and forth between the two pitches, F-sharp and F-natural. This melodic treatment characterizes Desenne's post-tonal language, achieving a warped effect through the extensive use of chromaticism, sigh figures, and a wide palette of vibrato indications that further asserts the transfigured nature of this work.

There are several performance indications that Desenne notates in the first section of "Goteras" that are commonly used in Baroque performance practice that can be seen as yet another homage to Vivaldi's time period. For example, the indications for the solo violin to employ vibrato in specific ways at different times attest to the composer's interest in using

---

[9] Rita Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Rochester: Univ. of Rochester Press, 2002), 156-162.

vibrato as an embellishment as was the tradition during Baroque times.[10] The different vibrato markings seem intended to express the mood or feeling portrayed in each phrase; Desenne envisions the solo violin phrasing with vibrato according to the emotion of the music as opposed to merely using vibrato as a constant tool for sound production. Included in his array of vibrato indications is the use of non-vibrato; Desenne is conscientious of the texture the ensemble creates for the solo violin to come through, writing *senza vibrato* (without vibrato) in the bowed string parts in the opening of "Goteras." The combination of non-vibrato and pizzicato techniques in the ensemble parts allow the solo violin's expressive and rapid variations in vibrato to come across to the listener. Along with intentional approach to vibrato, Desenne borrows another rhetorical device from Baroque performance practice – the use of the *messa di voce* (gradual crescendo and diminuendo on a long note)[11] in order to highlight the parts of the phrase that carry the most emotional tension in the opening melancholic melody of "Goteras."

The opening section seamlessly turns into a short-lived Venezuelan-style merengue in 5/8 in measures 28–35, which transports us from a gloomy wintery atmosphere to the festive world of the Caribbean. This transition represents an explicit shift from the Mediterranean to the Caribbean realm by immediately referencing a Venezuelan merengue[12] in the rhythmic motor. At measure 28 we switch from the initial 5/4 meter to a 5/8 meter, with the eighth-note pulse remaining the same. In Venezuelan music, merengue is commonly notated in 2/4, 6/8, or 5/8. However, none of these time signatures accurately represents what this rhythm actually sounds like in performance. In reality, it sounds somewhere between a 2/4 and a 5/8 meter, giving it a very peculiar lilt in-

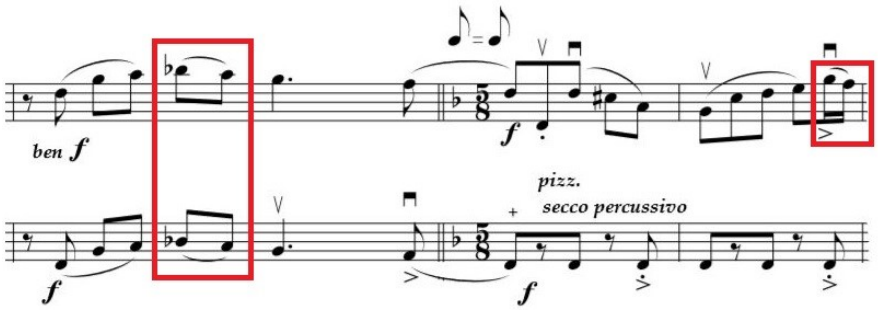
---

[10] Leopold Mozart, *A Treatise on the Fundamental Priciples of Violin Playing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), 203-204.

[11] Franceso Geminiani, *The Art of Playing on the Violin* (London, 1751), 2.

[12] Merengue is type of duple meter dance popular in Latin America. Commonly thought to have roots Dominican Republic, it existed in very distinct forms in different countries. *A History of Merengue* (Salsa & Merengue Society, 1999), https://www.salsa-merengue.co.uk/revealit/histmer/part1.html (accessed 15 November 2019).

between measures that Venezuelans call merengue *atravesa'ito* or "a little out of time" (different from Dominican merengue).[13] This feature is difficult to notate and perform, particularly if one is not familiar with the style. However, it is a rhythm that permeates much of Venezuela's music and is extremely popular across the country. This Venezuelan merengue section retrospectively gives meaning to the opening 5/4 compound meter, which in retrospect seems meant to presage the arrival of the first Latin American dance form reference. Desenne gives it the characteristic lilt of the Venezuelan merengue by adding an accent and a staccato mark on the last eighth note of each measure in the second violin part, as well as bringing out that same beat in the viola part and the solo violin. Hidden in the texture is the first quotation from Vivaldi's *Summer*: the distinctive two-note descending stepwise motive that opens the first movement concerto makes its way into a Venezuelan merengue (Example 5).



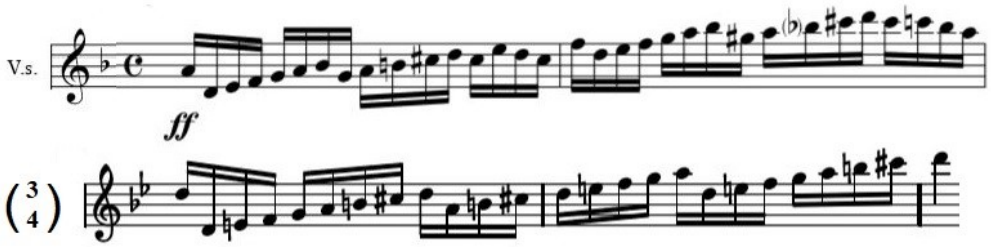
Example 5. Desenne, *Invierno,* "Goteras," solo violin and violin 1 parts, mm. 27–29

The brief reference to Venezuelan merengue is abruptly interrupted at measure 36 by the first quote from Vivaldi's third movement of *Summer* (Presto). Measures 36-48 of "Goteras" quotes Vivaldi's Presto from measures 38-54 almost exactly in terms of the distinctive figuration in the solo violin solo part and the orchestral accompaniment. However, Desenne transfigures

[13] Venezuelan merengue is a mix of popular rhythms such as polka, la danza and Spanish tango. Saúl Zavarce, *Venezuelan Music: the best kept secret in the Caribbean,* http://fiestajazz.com/articulo.html (accessed 13 November 2019).

Vivaldi's passage and turns it into an homage to Piazzolla's "Four Seasons of Buenos Aires" by introducing characteristic tango rhythmic patterns in the accompaniment.

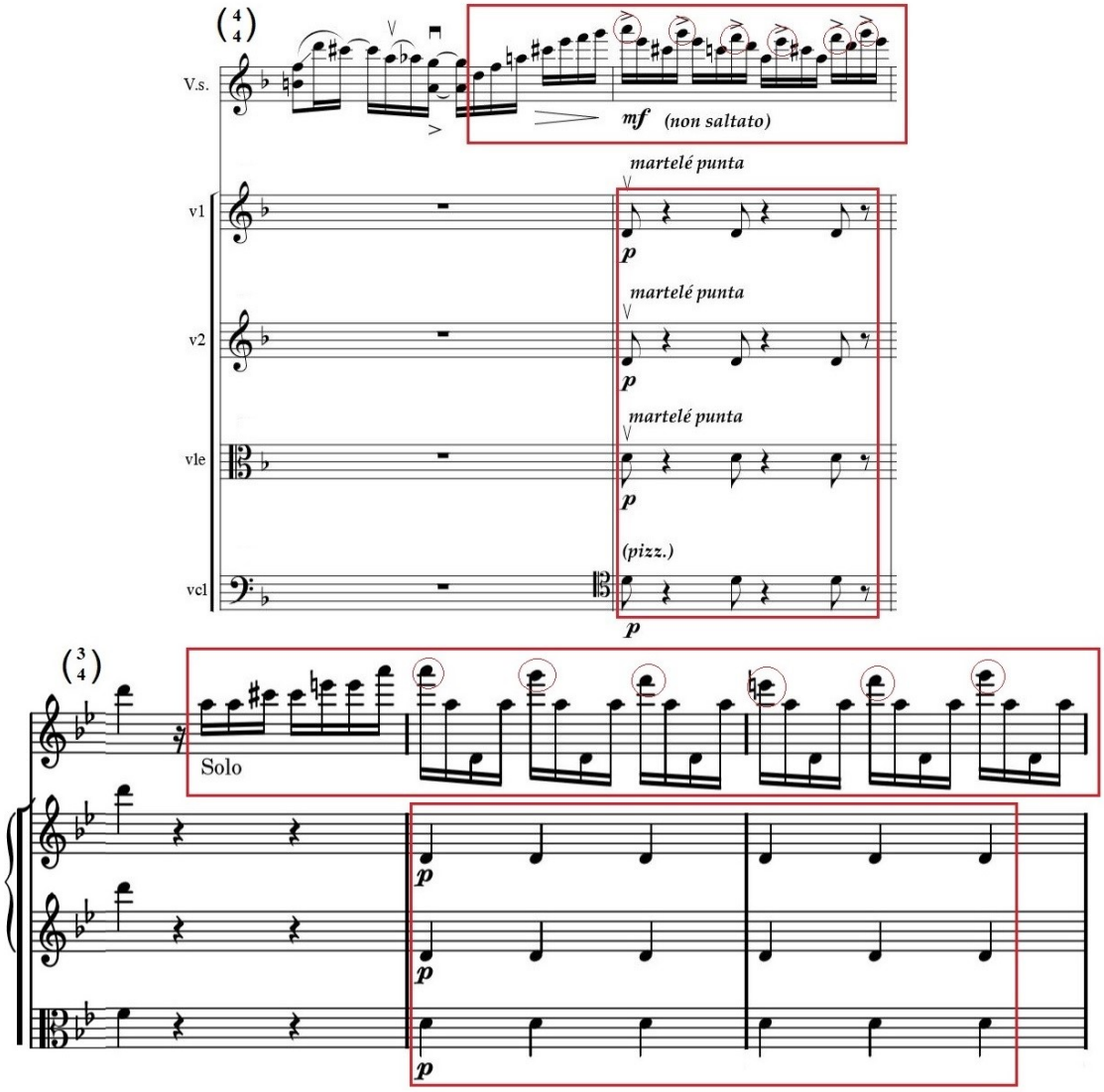
Measures 36 and 37 directly quote measures 38 and 39 from Vivaldi's Presto. The time signature changes to 4/4 and the solo violin plays a cadenza-like passage in sixteenth notes resembling the violin parts in Presto (Example 6). Desenne puts the spotlight on the solo violin by bringing all the parts abruptly to a halt; this is the first time in the movement when the whole orchestra drops out, creating a sudden bare texture that makes the solo violin shine with virtuosity as it escalates upwards. The main textural difference between Desenne's and Vivaldi's analogous passages is that Vivaldi has the tutti violins playing in unison with the solo violin instead of by itself. The climbing passage starts identically in both contexts, on an off-beat open D string. However, Desenne develops the passage differently by adding an extra beat per measure to the repeating pattern (Vivaldi's Presto is in a 3/4 time signature).



Example 6. Desenne, *Invierno,* "Goteras," solo violin, mm. 36–37 (top) and Vivaldi, *Summer,* Presto, mm. 38–39 (bottom)

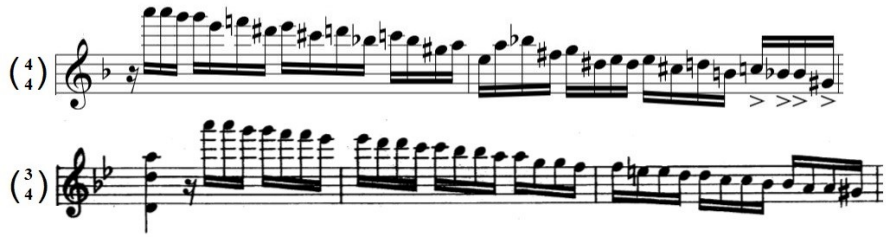
After the rising passage, beats three and four of measure 38 serve the same anacrusical function as beats two and three of measure 40 in Vivaldi's Presto, both leading to a similar treatment of the solo violin and orchestral parts. However, although Desenne follows the basic texture and contour of Vivaldi's passage, measures 39–42 represent the first reference to Argentine tango; the orchestra spells out a rhythmic pattern found in tango music and the solo

violin part is transfigured with chromatic passing notes and accents that highlights the tango rhythm (Example 7).



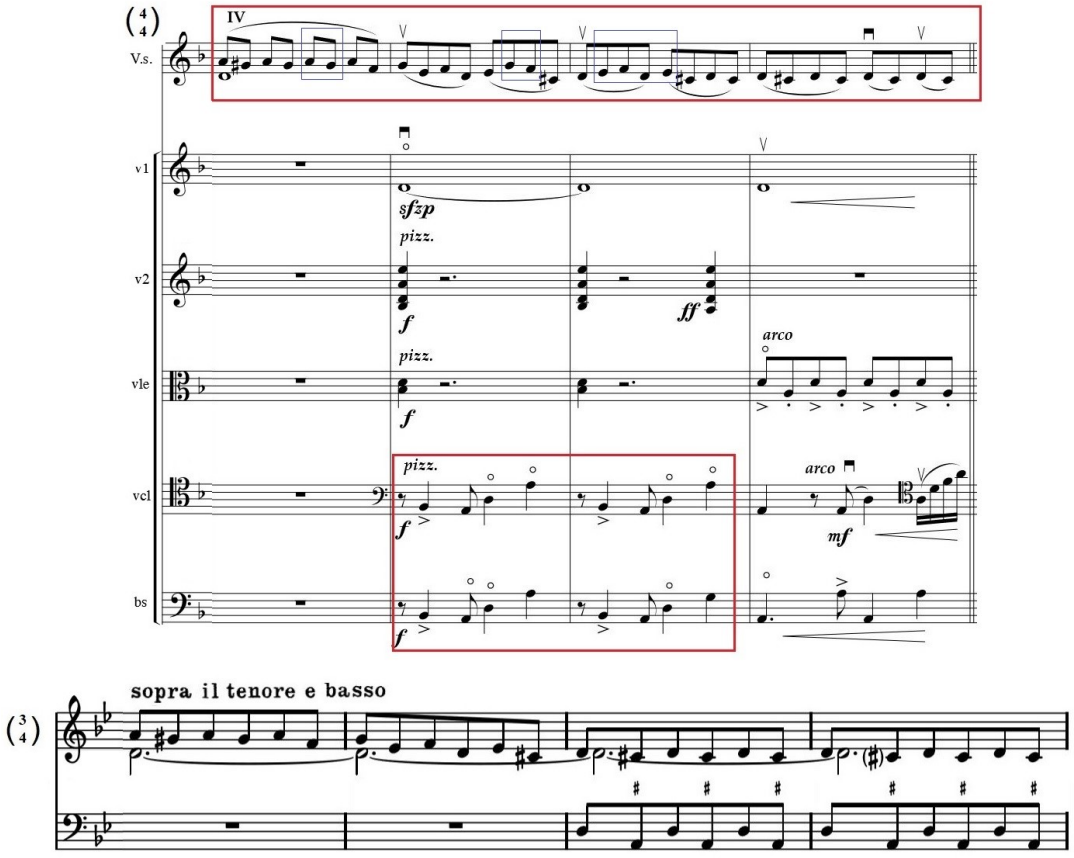
Example 7. Desenne, *Invierno,* "Goteras," mm. 38–39 (top) and Vivaldi, *Summer*, Presto, mm. 40–42 (bottom)

At measure 43, the solo violin takes the spotlight once more with a passage that resembles the recognizable contour and techniques found in its Baroque counterpart, though heavily imbued with chromatic neighboring tones (Example 8).



Example 8. Desenne, *Invierno,* "Goteras," mm. 43–44 (top) and Vivaldi, *Summer*, Presto, mm. 48–50 (bottom)

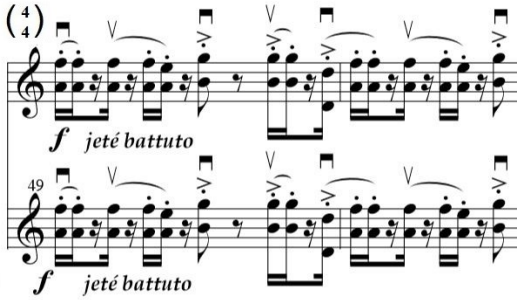
After a flashy display from the solo violin, Desenne extends the Vivaldian passage over a tango rhythmic foundation and a fuller orchestration. Measures 45–48 are analogous to measures 51–54 in Vivaldi's Presto, and the rhythm in measures 46–48 in the cello and bass parts is yet another distinctive rhythmic pattern found in tango (Example 9).



Example 9. Desenne, *Invierno,* "Goteras," mm. 45–48 (top) and Vivaldi, *Summer*, Presto, mm. 51–54 (bottom)

This section embodies the idea of a musical journey from Europe to Latin America, and Baroque music to tango. However, rather than a cordial co-existence, we experience an ideological battle between Baroque and tango styles; the Vivaldian quotes are presented as abrupt interruptions that Desenne inventively transforms into an homage to Piazzolla, making Latin America subversive and Europe submissive in this context.

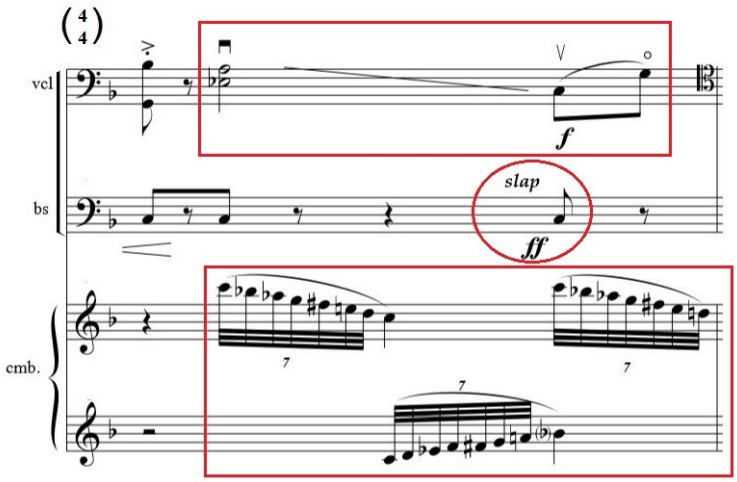
The arrival at measure 49 (letter E) marks a festive return to Caribbean dance forms. From this point until measure 58, we experience what Desenne calls a "kaleidoscope of Latin styles" that evoke Dominican merengue and cumbia rhythms. He achieves this effect by superimposing ricochet bowing techniques, which imitate rhythmic patterns and percussion instruments traditional in these dance forms, over a bed of independent and complex syncopated rhythms (Example 10). All the parts interlock effortlessly to create a texture evocative of traditional merengue and cumbia bands.



Example 10. Desenne, *Invierno,* "Goteras," solo violin and violin 1 parts, mm. 49–50

At measure 59 the Caribbean festivity is interrupted unexpectedly by a bridge that takes us back to a tango atmosphere. The bridge in measures 59–63 consists of improvisatory sixteenth notes in the solo violin accompanied by incisive short gestures in the orchestra; it is reminiscent of the passage at measure 36 and likewise puts the spotlight on the solo violin. The next section, lasting from measure 64 until 98, brings us back to a tango style and further transforms motivic ideas from Vivaldi's Presto. A slow-paced tango, marked *Un poco meno mosso*, takes over in

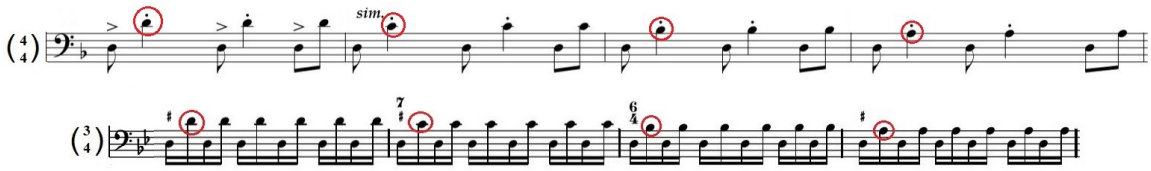
measure 64–71. The slower tempo and the distinctive effects in the orchestra immediately create an immersive tango atmosphere. The characteristic tango elements include accented eighth notes on the weak (second and fourth) serving as rhythmic accompaniment in the upper string, *glissandi* (slides) in the cello part, and chromatic descending and ascending scales in the harpsichord, which function as dramatic slides (Example 11). However, the feature that adds an unquestionable tango feel is the slapped pizzicato technique in the bass, which happens on the off beats along with the upper strings.



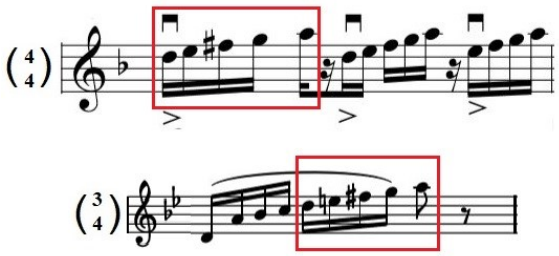
Example 11. Desenne, *Invierno,* "Goteras," cello, bass, and cembalo parts, m. 64

The orchestra briefly drops out on the second half of the measure 71 and the solo violin plays a brief connecting passage of sixteenth notes that leads us to the final stylistic juxtaposition of European and Latin American motives, similar to that experienced in measures 36–48. In this next section, Desenne once more uses Vivaldi's score as a canvas upon which he creatively combines different styles and transfigures familiar motives: quotations from Vivaldi's Presto and tango elements are superimposed in exhilarating sequences and motivic development from measure 72 to 98 (letter G to J), which follows the trajectory of measures 21–40 in Vivaldi's Presto.

From measure 72 to 79, the violas, bass, and cembalo left hand take on steady rhythmic patterns suggestive of tango while the bass and cembalo right hand parts have embedded a descending tetrachord also found in measures 21–28 in Vivaldi's Presto (Example 12). At the same time, the *tutti* violins and cembalo right hand imitate the ascending scalar motivic material found in the upper strings parts in Presto and creates a fluttering sixteenth-note texture that is rhythmically aligns with the offbeat tango accents (Example 13).



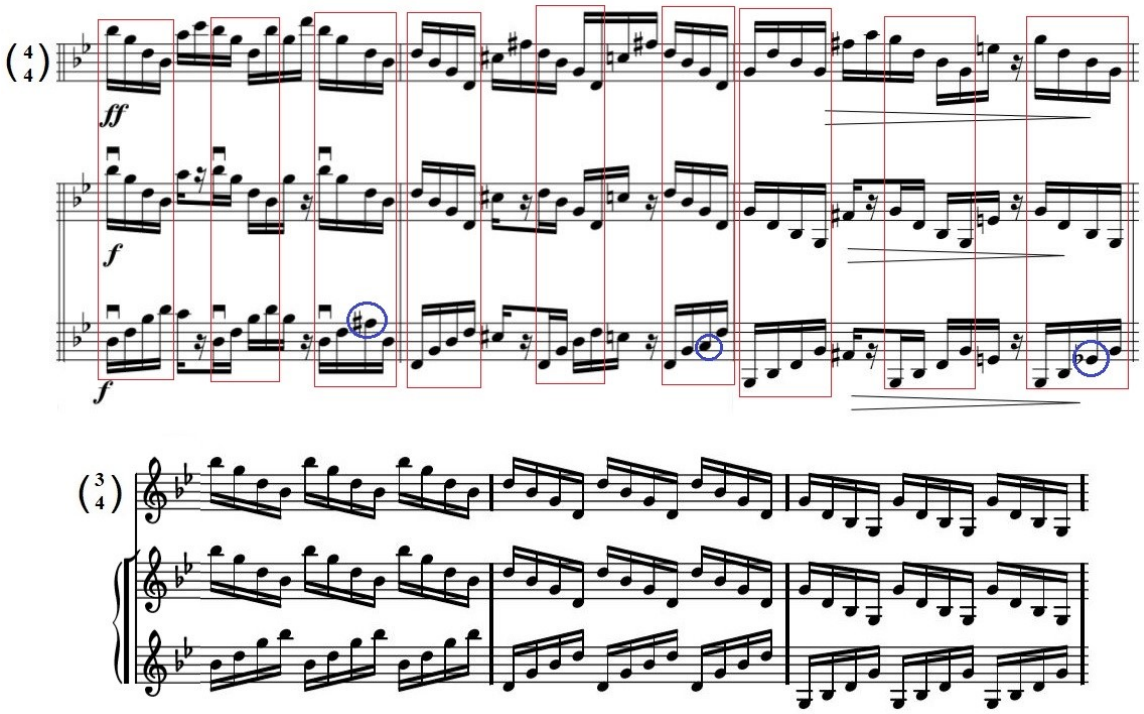
Example 12. Desenne, *Invierno,* "Goteras," mm. 72–74 (top) and Vivaldi, *Summer,* Presto, mm. 21–24 (bottom)



Example 13. Desenne, *Invierno,* "Goteras," violin 1, m. 72 (top) and Vivaldi, *Summer,* Presto, violins, m. 21 (bottom)

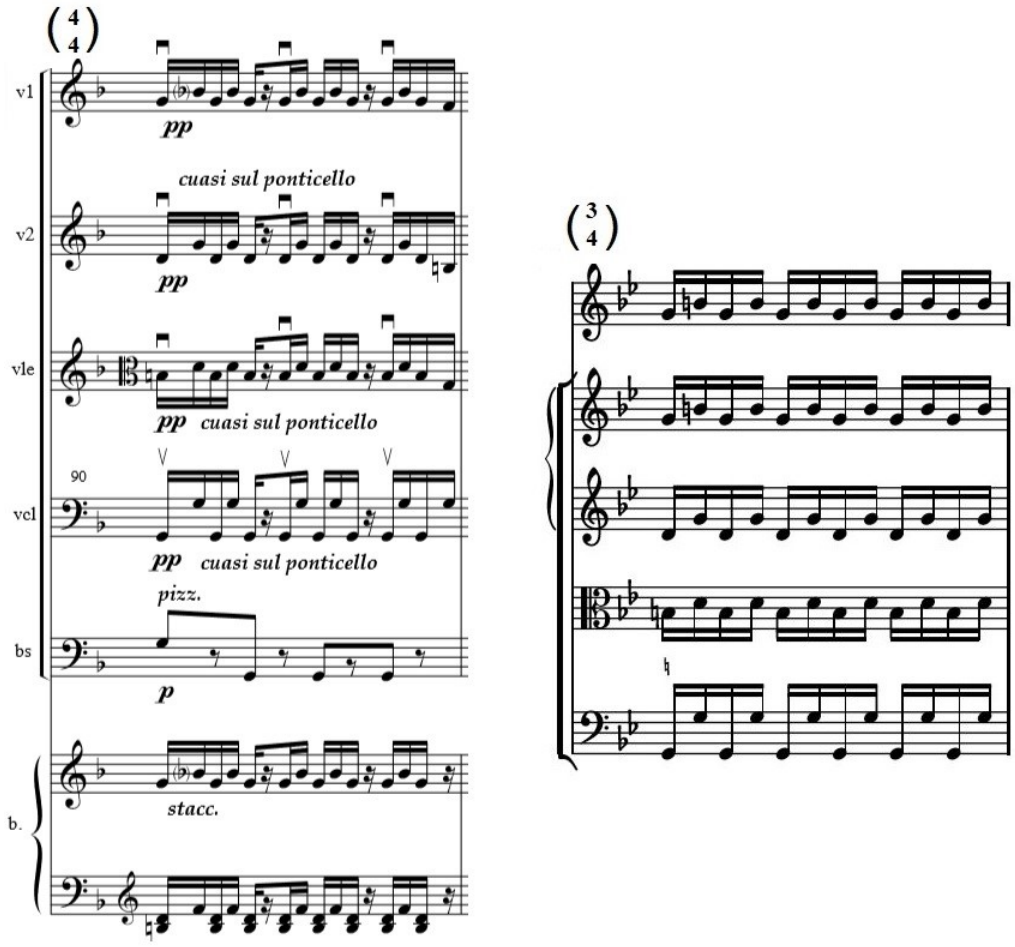
At measure 80 (letter H), Desenne quotes and transfigures the arpeggiated progression in the violins in measures 29–31 of Vivaldi's Presto, and the cello and bass parts provide a tango rhythmic pattern as accompaniment. Vivaldi's original passage can be found embedded faithfully in Desenne's version (except for some instances of octave displacement), with one note altered chromatically at the end of each inversion of the arpeggio and added notes that extend the passage

from a 3/4 to a 4/4 meter (Example 14). This three-measure descending sequence represents what Desenne refers to as a "modulating baroque progression" – it suggests the key of g minor in its first iteration, and then it modulates to c minor at measure 84, where it is repeated almost exactly. After another rapid modulation, the sequential pattern starts unraveling and the harmony becomes distorted, vaguely suggesting the key of g-sharp minor at measure 88 for a third and last iteration.



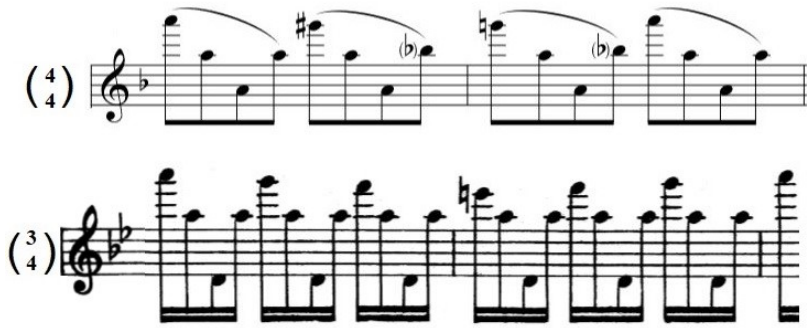
Example 14. Desenne, *Invierno,* "Goteras," solo violin and violins 1 and 2, mm. 80–82 (top) and Vivaldi, *Summer,* Presto, solo violin and violins 1 and 2 mm. 29–31 (bottom)

This last iteration of the progression builds up tension and disembogues into measure 91 (letter I), marked *Nervoso* (nervous). The next eight bars possess the most excitement, drive, and tension in the whole movement. The solo violin part reaches its highest note yet and the bass plays a grim recollection of the opening plucked roof leaks sounds. The rest of the parts homophonically play a menacing and impending sixteenth-note figuration that quotes measures 32–30 of Vivaldi's Presto (Example 15).



Example 15. Desenne, *Invierno,* "Goteras," score without solo violin, m. 91 (left) and Vivaldi, *Summer,* Presto, score, m. 32 (right)

Following the anticipation created by measures 91–94, Desenne once more quotes the iconic passage from measures 41–43 of Vivaldi's Presto (quoted back in measure 39) at measures 95–96, although this time he does it in a more dramatic way that greatly amplifies the intensity of the music. He transforms the solo violin part, originally in sixteenth notes, into a chromatic rendition metrically augmented into eighth notes (Example 16).



Example 16. Desenne, *Invierno,* "Goteras," solo violin, m. 95–96 (top) and Vivaldi, *Summer,* Presto, solo violin, mm. 41–42 (bottom)

After an exhilarating succession of tango transformations, measures 97 and 98 present us with an exact iteration of measures 36–37, which represents the first quotation from Vivaldi's Presto. On this instance, the solo violin plays in unison with the first violins, emulating the solo and tutti violins in Vivaldi's original passage. This second declamatory iteration leads not to Vivaldi, but to a coda consisting of a festive medley of Latin rhythms. While the solo violin plays a jazzy and hustling riff, our attention is drawn to the viola and cello parts, which relish in an easygoing melody in unison over a multilayered bed of complex rhythms. After a tutti sforzando on the last 16th-note of the penultimate measure, Desenne clears the air for two whole beats and comically lets the solo violin finish the movement on its own by playing an octave in pizzicato on the third beat of the measure. This last gesture is reminiscent of the octave pizzicato that opens the movement, with the plucked cello and cembalo right hand depicting the sound of roof leaks.

It is initially unclear why Desenne would quote Vivaldi's *Summer* given that "Goteras" is meant to depict winter in the Caribbean. However, the relationship between "Goteras" and Vivaldi's *Summer* becomes evident upon reading portions of the sonnets that accompany the first and third movements of *Summer*. At the end of the first movement, "the shepherd trembles, fearing violent storms and his fate;" in the third movement, the sonnet describes, "Alas, his fears were justified, the Heavens thunders and roar and with hail cuts the head off the wheat

and damages the grain."[14] Desenne quotes and transfigures the most furious portions from Vivaldi's Presto to depict the fury of the storms during the Caribbean rainy season. In the same way that Vivaldi's sonnet for this movement describes the devastation caused by the summer storms, Desenne makes us consider a different type of devastation brought on by the Caribbean storms during the rainy season, when "the tin and cardboard houses of the shanty towns are soaked; everything is grey and wet".[15] The winter season in the Caribbean Tropics does not threaten with cold temperatures, snow, and ice; instead, it threatens with downpours and storms while the temperatures do not fluctuate much from the rest of the year. Both types of devastation, portrayed by Vivaldi and Desenne, similarly affect the livelihood of those exposed to the force of the seasons, regardless of geographical location or time period.

The ingenious quality of "Goteras" lies not merely in Desenne's quoting of Vivaldi – after all, musical borrowing was a common compositional practice in the Baroque period; it lies in Desenne's adaptation and transfiguration of Vivaldi's text and subtext into his own writing. He subjects Baroque forms, progressions, and motives to his own hybrid style and traditional Latin American styles, as opposed to the other way around. Desenne brings the Baroque master to the New World, and although he does not deny his influence, he does not place him above other musical influences in Latin America. In fact, Desenne's homage to tango and Piazzolla's "Four Seasons of Buenos Aires" has just as much prevalence in "Goteras" as Vivaldi's "Four Seasons," and both are permeated with traditional Caribbean rhythms.

The prevalence of Latin American rhythms in this movement and the way Desenne merges them with the music of Vivaldi speaks of Desenne's stance regarding the role of traditional musical genres and their convergence with classical music in Latin America. It symbolizes not only how he as a composer intersects classical and folkloric traditions, but most

---

[14] Translated from the original text in Italian found on the score.
[15] Desenne, program notes, score.

importantly, a vision of the creative potential and endless resources that Latin American composers have at their disposal. Traditional folkloric music in Venezuela holds a unique place in the hearts of its inhabitants, and it is as popular as commercial pop genres; it conveys a sense of national identity and history, and a feeling of collective pride and nostalgia for times past. It is an integral part of our cultural heritage and daily lives. Similar to Filomeno in Carpentier's Concierto Barroco, Desenne's "Goteras" is an example of a Baroque world infused and overtaken by Caribbean styles. Although it is an homage to Vivaldi, Desenne turns "Goteras" into a hybrid world where Caribbean musical roots and virtuosity prevail and enhance its Baroque counterpart. The journey through the intersection between Baroque and Caribbean not only pays tribute, but most importantly, equalizes all of Latin America's musical roots; it recognizes Baroque music's influence, and at the same time subverts it by redefining musical and cultural assumptions and culminating with the triumph of a new multilayered Latin American musical language.

II. "Coquiloquio (Frog Assembly)"

> These peculiar frogs can be heard almost anywhere on a Caribbean night, and very frequently in the city of Caracas, where they have become the symbol of the rainy season. It is said that the melodious nocturnal Costa Rican and Puerto Rican species were brought to Venezuela by a rich woman who wanted to hear the songs of these small batrachia in her garden in Caracas. From that first garden, the invisible black frogs invaded the whole city with their high-pitched mating calls. The song of the Coqui frogs is heard throughout this movement, replacing the barking dog in Vivaldi's famous slow movement before the summer storm. I used the exact transcription of the interacting Coqui calls over Vivaldi's accompaniment, used as a cantus firmus. The dotted-sixteenth motive of the original text goes through several transfigurations, stressing the nocturnal character: jazzy swing, nocturnal invasion by other insects and batrachia, atonal romantic drama, and back to Vivaldi with frogs. The movement represents the tropical night in Caracas, where human and animal rhythms meet without canceling each other out, each one on a different wavelength.[16]

[16] Desenne, program notes, score.

During my childhood, I never gave any thought to the nocturnal sounds in the garden outside my bedroom window in my home in Venezuela. They were insect sounds that existed in the night for as long as I could remember and, to the best of my knowledge at the time, never helped nor obstructed my sleep; they were just the unquestioned soundtrack to a cool tropical night. These sounds were ever more prominent due to the style of non-insulated windows traditionally used in many Venezuelan households, including my own. This kind of window did little to seal off our house from the outside world, especially insectoid visitors. Such visitors found their way merrily into our home, as did the busy sounds of unknown happenings in the garden through the night. It was not until moving to the United States that I realized how conditioned my sleep was to nocturnal chorus I had grown up with. It took a while to get accustomed to the hermetic nightly silence that comes with more extreme seasonal changes. These memories and reflections came to mind along with a dose of nostalgia when I first listened to "Coquilouio," the second movement of Desenne's *Invierno* [Rainy Season]. The sound of the violin imitating the frogs was an exact transcription of the frogs in my garden, which I did not even know were called coqui frogs, or were an invasive species in our region, until I read Desenne's program notes. I felt an immediate connection with Desenne – it was as if he were giving voice to a collective memory, which was indescribable with words and only understandable through common experience.

The title of this movement, "Coquiloquio," is a play on the word "coqui," which refers to the frogs depicted (named after the onomatopoeia of their very loud nocturnal mating call), and the Spanish word *coloquio*, which translates as "colloquy" in English. Thus, Desenne's own translation of this movement is "Frog Assembly."[17] From beginning to end, "Coquiloquio"

[17] An alternative English translation of the word *coloquio* is "colloquium." Desenne's English title for this movement, "Frog Assembly," suggests a gathering and conversation among a group of batrachian, thus the choice to use colloquy in this context rather than colloquium.

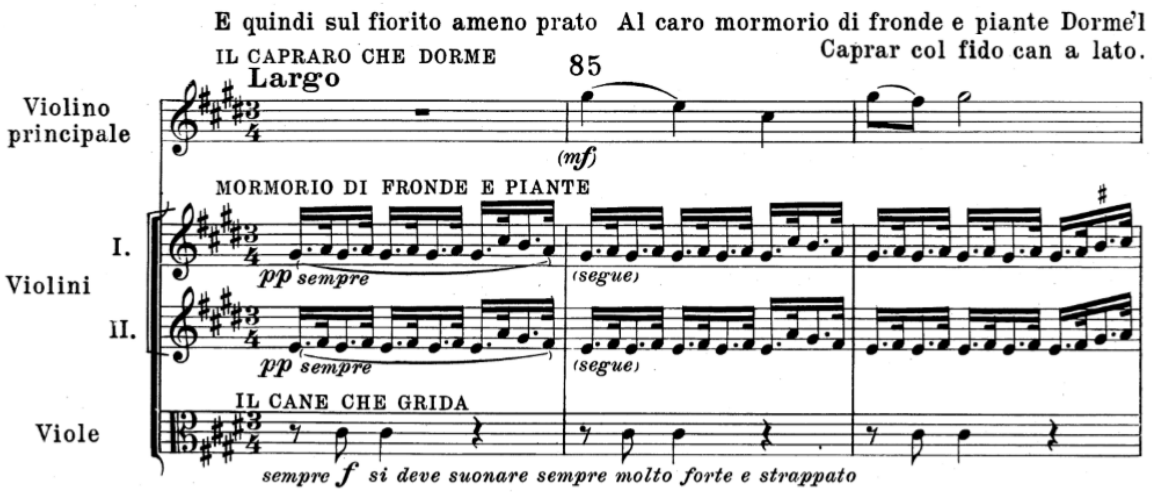
sounds as if there are always two or more frogs dialoguing, arguing, or just existing independently in the night. The Vivaldian quotations are immediately evident from the start, but the world Desenne presents them in suggests a distant altered version of Vivaldi's familiar soundscape. The sonorities and atmosphere express deeply introverted yet intricately multilayered interactions – a surreal plane where different realities exist despite of one another.

"Coquiloquio" is inspired by the second movement (Largo) from Vivaldi's *Spring*, and it is uniquely and imaginatively infused with the nocturnal song of unsynchronized coqui frogs heard during the tropical rainy season. In his program notes, Desenne states that the sound of the coqui is heard throughout the movement and it replaces the sound of the barking dog omnipresent in Vivaldi's Largo. The barking dog is still a distinct motive in "Coquiloquio," but it does not serve as the faithful and expected voice that it symbolizes in Vivaldi's Largo. The sonnet that accompanies Vivaldi's Largo gives us an insight into the dreamlike world that Desenne had in mind as a starting point for "Coquiloquio":

> And in the meadow, rich with flowers,
> To the sweet murmur of leaves and plants,
> The goatherd sleeps, with his faithful dog at his side.[18]

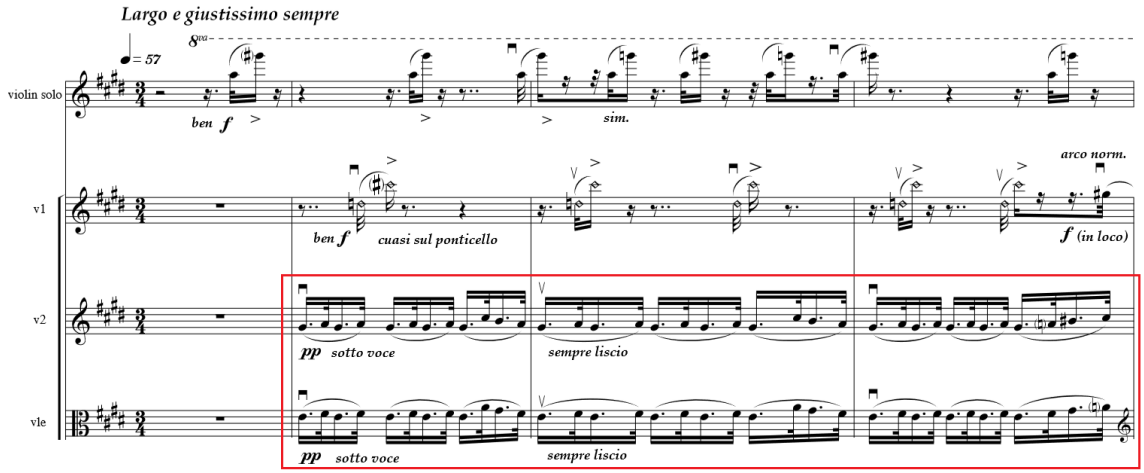
In addition to the sonnet found at the top of Largo, Vivaldi's own programmatic indications gives us a clear image of the meaning of each motive and role of each instrument in the texture. For example, the solo violin part is marked as *Il Capraro Che Dorme* – traditionally translated as 'the sleeping goatherd;' the first and second violin parts, marked as *Mormorio di fronde e piante*, together symbolize the murmur of leaves and plants; and lastly, the viola is given the role of the barking dog – *Il cane che grida* (Example 17).

[18] Translated from the original text in Italian found on the score.



Example 17. Vivaldi's *Spring*, Largo (second movement) score, mm. 1–3

Vivaldi leaves the cello, bass, and cembalo out of the texture for the entirety of this movement, creating an ethereal atmosphere for the solo violin to drift upon calmly. According to his program notes, Desenne chose the "murmur of leaves and plants" accompanimental texture as the bedrock for "Coquiloquio;" it becomes a cantus firmus which Desenne transcribes almost completely verbatim from Vivaldi's Largo and around which everything else interweaves, interjects, and experiences transformations (Example 18). Desenne primarily maintains the cantus firmus in the second violin and viola parts, but at times he delegates one of the parts to either the cello or the first violin, without compromising its original tessitura, to allow the inner parts to momentarily take on a different role in the texture. The dreamlike atmosphere that Vivaldi's texture creates in "Coquiloquio" give us a familiar aural anchor as we travel through Desenne's multilayered nocturnal world.

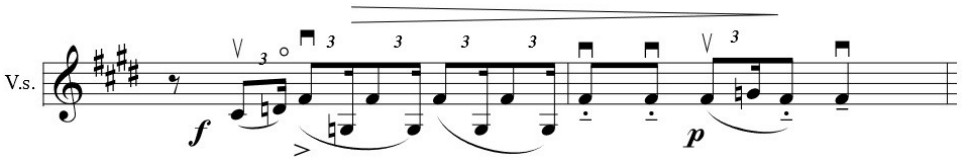


Example 18. Desenne, *Invierno*, "Coquiloquio," mm. 1–4, score

It is thanks to the faithful transcription of the accompaniment in Vivaldi's Largo that we perceive a much more accentuated and apparent similarity between "Coquiloquio" and Vivaldi when compared to the outer movements. Desenne employs the same immutable 3/4 time signature from beginning to end that Vivaldi uses in his Largo, which is unusual considering the frequent meter changes present in Desenne's outer movements. Like Vivaldi's Largo, "Coquiloquio" shares the same tempo and affect marking, but with an additional indication – *Largo e giustissimo sempre*. The word *giusto* is a common Italian musical term indicating that the music be played in an exact manner. The superlative expression Desenne writes, *giustissimo sempre* – very exact always, emphasizes the strictness of tempo and meter that he strives for in this movement. This call for metric rigor is necessary both to maintain the Vivaldian cantus firmus intact and to provide a firm foundation upon which the other motives and voices can interject, sometimes arbitrarily and other times in accord. This exactitude serves as foothold for both performers and listeners alike amidst the contrapuntal and rhythmic complexity that infiltrates in this movement.

"Coquiloquio" is a unique movement in that there is very little melodic material overall, which is rare for a slow second movement of a concerto – especially one inspired by a Baroque

concerto. When a voice has melodic writing, it is often brief and fragmentary or derived from a transfigured motive. Contrastingly, Desenne's own transcription of the song of the coqui frogs as well as Vivaldi's "murmur of leaves and plants" cantus firmus are heard clearly throughout the movement. Even though Desenne explains in his notes about the work that the frogs replace the barking dog from Vivaldi's Largo, we still hear the mutated canine motive has an important role in the texture. Moreover, there is one other recurrent motive that alternates between voices throughout the movement, which is introduced as the first semi-melodic interjection of the solo violin at measure 8 (letter A). This melodic fragment made up of a jarring repeated major seventh first comes across as a melodic and rhythmic transmutation of the cantus firmus (Example 19).



Example 19. Desenne, *Invierno*, "Coquiloquio," solo violin, mm. 8–9

However, this exact same motive is also found in the opening of the fourth movement, "Andante con yopo/Alegrías," of Desenne's Sonata for Solo Violin (1998). In his program notes for this work, Desenne says:

> After death, only shamans can communicate with the souls of the departed. For that purpose they must sing magic verses under the influence of yopo, a hallucinogenic bark extract. These chants are repetitive melodies that clear the path to the underworld and neutralize evil spirits with the help of certain magic associations with birds such as the Cönötö and the Nyctibius grandis, whose songs are quoted in this piece.[19]

Desenne's quotation of his own earlier work gives us further insight into the atmosphere he aims to create in "Coquiloquio." According to his program notes, this movement "represents the tropical night in Caracas, where human and animal rhythms meet without canceling each

[19] Fernandez, "Paul Desenne," 47.

other out, each one on a different wavelength." The shaman chant motive found in "Coquiloquio," quoted from his solo violin sonata, thus symbolizes a way to connect the human and animal worlds in a soundscape that feels both ethereal and spiritual as well as earthly and familiar. The influence of the hallucinogenic bark extract also explains the mind-bending effect while experiencing this movement and the transformations it undergoes.

The structure of this movement emulates the shape of a *messa di voce*, starting from silence, gradually growing in intensity and evolving towards the latter half of the movement, and rapidly coming back down and fading into nothing. The first sonority that we hear is the sound of a coqui frog alone in the solo violin part, which immediately invites a cacophonous interaction with other coqui frogs between the solo and first violin parts. This dialogue occurs on top of the transcribed cantus firmus from Vivaldi's Largo, which starts on the second measure. In "Coquiloquio," it is the second violins and the violas who take on the role of the tutti violins in Vivaldi's Largo. However, the viola part is notated at the same octave as the second violin part in the Largo, making it sound identical in register and texture as its original counterpart; thus, we do not immediately recognize the difference in instrument choice between the two movements. Contrastingly, the solo violin and the tutti first violins adopt the role of the barking dog, reciting the interaction of the coqui frogs calling one another. Upon first listening, the song of the coqui frogs sounds somewhat arbitrary; without seeing the score, one might assume an "ad libitum coqui" indication over the solo and first violin parts, with no specified rhythms for the first seven measures of the movement. However, the rhythm and note lengths of the batrachian sounds are precisely notated, and their interaction timed to the thirty-second note. To someone who has first-hand experience hearing the song of coqui frogs in their natural habitat, this is as close a transcription as one could imagine. Desenne's *giustissimo sempre* marking plays an important role, providing a strict metric foundation for the seemingly random yet intricately notated counterpoint of the coqui mating calls.

The opening seven measures of the movement serve an introductory role, presenting the primary thematic materials and setting the ambiance for what is to come. Because of our familiarity with Vivaldi's famous Largo from *Spring*, we expect to hear a solo violin melody enter one measure after the borrowed dotted 16th-note accompaniment. However, our expectation is left unfulfilled since the solo violin is occupied imitating the sound of the coqui frogs and takes a different kind of protagonist role. One inevitably hears Vivaldi's melody tacitly over Desenne's texture given that the borrowed cantus firmus retains not only the same rhythm and contour but also the same harmony as in Vivaldi's Largo. Additionally, the ethereal atmosphere created by the overall high register in this opening texture and the absence of the cello, basso, and cembalo are qualities reminiscent of Vivaldi (although Desenne has also chosen to exclude the cembalo completely from this movement, the cello and bass are only tacit for the first seven measures). Since the sleeping shepherd's dog is not found barking in this opening section, it is the shrill mating calls of the coqui frogs that keeps our dreams tethered to reality in "Coquiloquio." The dissonant song of the coqui frogs, heard on the forefront of the texture, promptly blurs the implied C-sharp minor tonality heard in the *sotto voce* accompaniment and plants the seed of tonal ambiguity in our ears.

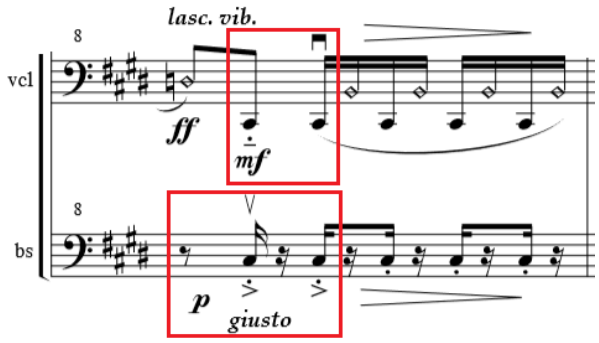
After we hear a full iteration of the first harmonic progression offered by the cantus firmus, Desenne brings in the cello and bass for the first time at measure 8 (letter A) for a sudden momentous arrival. Based on Vivaldi's phrase and harmonic structure, we expect a C-sharp minor cadence at measure 8; however, any sense of tonality we have so far acquired is ripped away by a new atonal motive introduced by the solo violin, the shaman chant theme that Desenne borrows from his solo violin sonata. This is the first time that the solo part plays a somewhat melodic passage in the low register of the violin, for which it comes down from the stratosphere of the fingerboard. Interestingly, the shaman chant theme is composed of a descending major seventh interval on the lowest possible string and position of the violin, while the two-note call of

the coqui frog is initially introduced as an ascending major seventh interval on the highest possible string and position of the violin, exploring the two most extreme realms of the violin's sonority. In addition to the register and direction of the interval, the rhythmic emphasis of the two themes is also reversed – the coqui motive has a short-long pattern, while the shaman theme a long-short pattern. This dichotomy further symbolizes the co-occurrence of two completely different yet intersecting nocturnal worlds. Moreover, the idea of reversal is one that Desenne first introduced in his program notes for first movement, "Goteras," where he explains: "In Argentine slang, where everything is said backwards, "tango" becomes "gotan," and "gota" is a drop." This infusion of reversal techniques can be seen as a continuing homage to Piazzolla's take on Vivaldi's "Four Seasons."

Measure 8 is also the first time that we hear a hint of the Vivaldi work's two-note barking dog motive,[20] which emerges in the cello and bass parts and is embedded in the texture in a way that reinforces the shaman chant and the cantus firmus. Even though the continuous and smooth dotted 16th-note line is enough to make listeners think of Vivaldi, the barking dog motive is one of the most distinctive, popular, and memorable musical gestures from Vivaldi's "Four Seasons." The two first low notes in the cello and bass parts come out of the texture distinctly as a reference to the decisive two-note barking motive in Vivaldi's Largo, although the simple evocative motive is quickly transformed into something more profound (Example 20). The cello's sixteenth notes alternating back and forth between low and high harmonic notes embody a dual animal identity, portraying both the sound of the rumbling dog and the high-pitched coqui frogs. They also

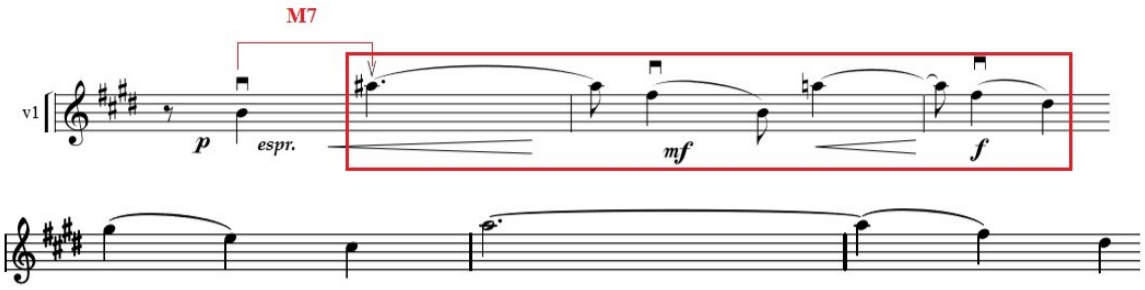
[20] The two-note barking dog motive in Vivaldi's Largo, played by the viola, consists of an eighth note on the second half of beat one followed by a quarter note on beat two in a 3/4 time signature, which appears consistently with the same rhythm and metric placement in every measure of the movement. According to the score, the viola represents *Il Cane che grida* (the barking dog), depicting the faithful dog laying next to the napping shepherd (portrayed by the solo violin melody). The immutable nature of this motive and its forceful nature in an otherwise calm atmosphere make it a distinguishing and memorable ostinato in Vivaldi's movement.

symbolize the two worlds, animal and human, which Desenne seeks to connect through the shaman chant in the solo violin part.



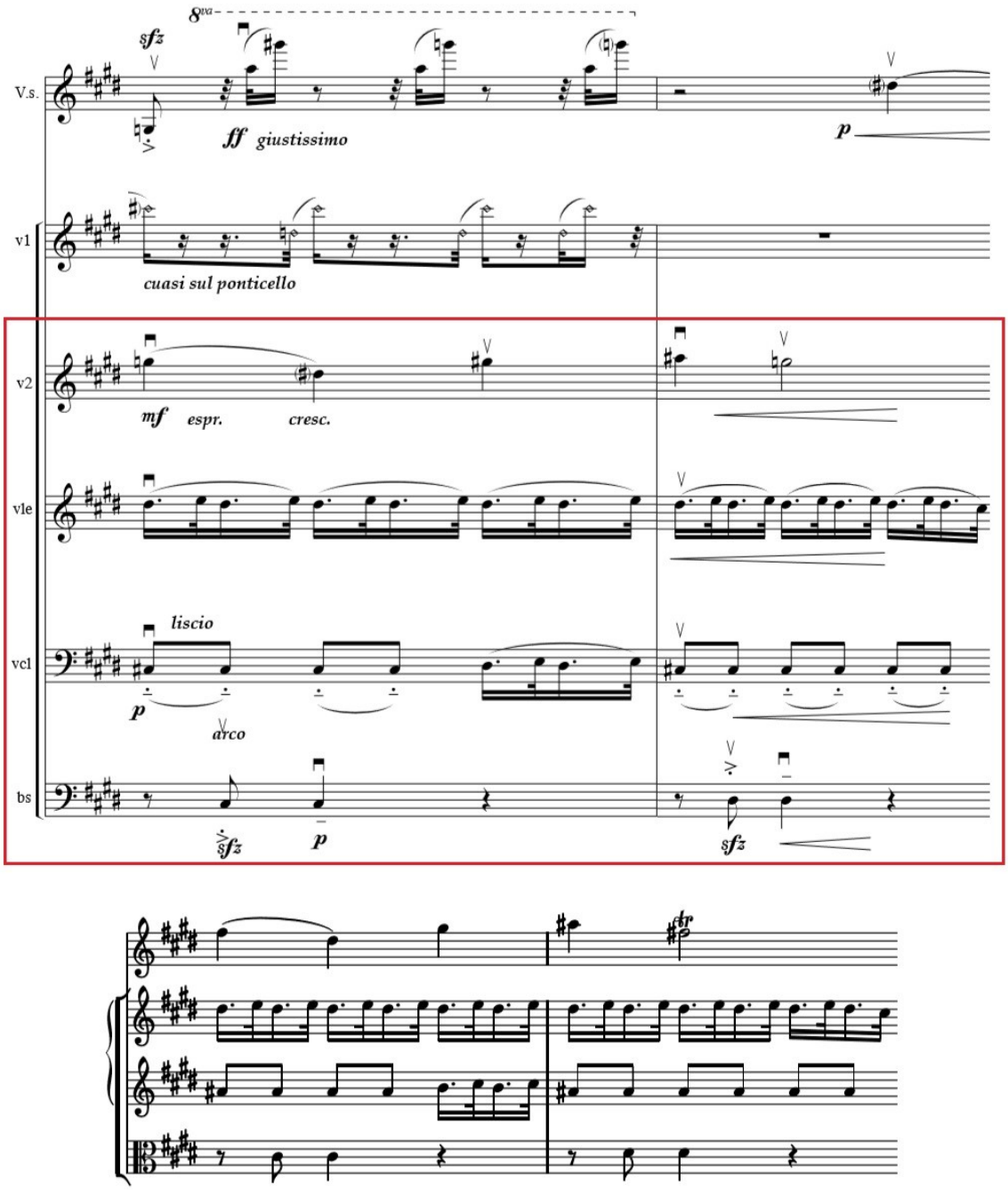
Example 20. Desenne, *Invierno*, "Coquiloquio," cello and bass, m. 8

After the introduction of the barking dog and shaman motives, measure 10 represents the first melodic material in the movement. The first violin part, which had until now been imitating the coquis, is transformed into a melody that starts with the same jarring major seventh interval as the shaman motive, but ascending; it can also be seen as an augmented version of the two-note call of the coqui. This atonal melody lasts for three measures, and its contour bears resemblance to the "sleeping shepherd" solo violin theme in Vivaldi's Largo (Example 21). From this point forward, fragments of the cantus firmus start appearing transfigured and interspersed in different voices, while the inner voice's cantus firmus remains intact. These fragments and transformations of the cantus firmus, when presented in the solo violin part, convey a sense of anxiety that create tension in the otherwise calm atmosphere that the inner voices invoke.



Example 21. Desenne, *Invierno*, "Coquiloquio," violin 1, mm. 10–12 (top) and Vivaldi, *Spring* Largo, solo violin mm. 8–10 (bottom)

The first time that Desenne notates the two-note barking dog figure plainly and undisguised is in the bass part at measure 18. Moreover, measures 18 and 19 are unique in the whole movement in that they are the only exact replicas of Vivaldi's Largo, including its solo violin melody, which until now had only appeared as a hazy reference in measures 10–12 in the first violins. Although the notes are exactly transcribed, Desenne has shifted Vivaldi's score down two parts – the sleeping shepherd's melody is played by the second violins, the murmur of the leaves and plants is played at its original tessitura by the violas and cellos, and the barking dog is played by the basses, though an octave lower. All the while, the solo and first violins play the song of the coqui frogs. There is not another moment in the whole movement when we hear all of Vivaldi's original texture superimposed so transparently with Desenne's tropical infusion (Example 22).



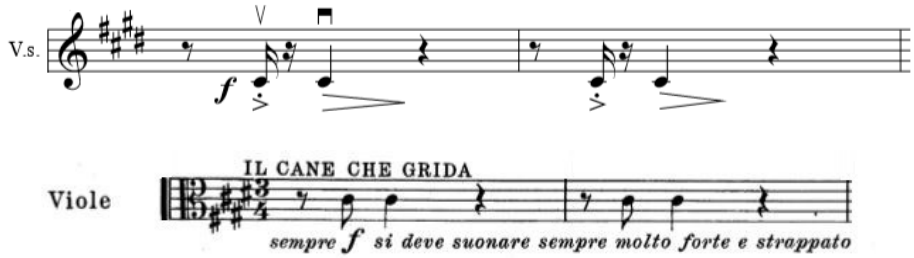
Example 22. Desenne, *Invierno*, "Coquiloquio," mm. 18–19, score (top) and Vivaldi, *Spring* Largo, mm. 16–17, score (bottom)

After the two-note barking dog motive is first introduced into the texture, Desenne isolates the first of the two notes, the one on the offbeat, and brings it back intermittently

throughout the movement as an allusive gesture. This offbeat gesture provides rhythmic relief amidst batrachian asynchrony. For example, at measure 13 (letter B) the cello has repeated offbeat eighth notes that are reminiscent of the barking dog, though they now have a different meaning. From measures 13–15, each of these offbeat eighth notes is notated as a double-stop harmonic on the notes G and F-sharp. The harmonic alludes to the high-pitched coqui motive, and the interval of a major seventh evokes both the coqui mating call and the eerie shaman chant. Even in the midst of cacophonous brachial mating calls, our ears hold onto the rhythmic sternness of the single offbeat note in the famous two-note bark motive. Another instance when the barking dog motive appears in a different form is in measures 20 and 21, where the barking dog inconspicuously transforms into a human rhythm, spelling out a *clave* rhythmic pattern in the bass over two measures. Disguised as a coqui frog, the first violins also join the rhythm section of the Latin jazz band at measure 20 by playing the *clave* rhythm along with the basses. This interjection of Latin rhythms occurs as the shaman chant returns intensified and transfigured in the second violin part at letter C, signaling the convergence of the human and animal nocturnal worlds.

In measure 26, the barking dog motive makes a first appearance in the solo violin. This and every other time the two-note barking figure is played by the solo violin (measures 30 and 38–40), Desenne notates the offbeat eighth note as a sixteenth note and sixteenth rest instead (Example 23). Desenne's notation of Vivaldi's barking dog motive gives us an insight into his interpretation and practical application of Baroque performance practice principles. A period performance specialist would interpret an offbeat eighth note in this context as short and detached from the subsequent repeated note, supporting Desenne's choice of notation – especially considering Vivaldi's indication to the performer to play this figure as loudly as possible with a

tearing sound.[21] However, a modern player without knowledge of historically informed performance might not interpret or execute the offbeat eighth note in the same manner. This minute yet significant discrepancy in notation demonstrates Desenne's awareness and consideration of both Baroque and modern performance practices, as well as the aesthetics and expectations associated with each. He is aware that modern players today are trained to read rhythmic notation more literally in comparison to historical performance specialists –or musicians during Vivaldi's times for that matter–, for whom rhythmic notation tends to be relative and dependent on context. In other words, Desenne notation is a prescriptive interpretation of Vivaldi's descriptive writing.[22]



Example 23. Desenne, *Invierno*, "Coquiloqio," mm. 26–27, solo violin (top) and Vivaldi, *Spring* Largo, viola, mm. 1–2

From measures 20 to 35 (letters C to E), the climax of the movement, we hear the gradually intensifying and constantly evolving intersection of all the different worlds that Desenne mentions in his program notes – jazzy swing, nocturnal invasion by other insects and batrachia, and atonal romantic drama. As the night escalates with jazzy riffs and other nocturnal visitors, Vivaldi's cantus firmus and barking dog motive provide a familiar rhythmic anchor. At measure 38 (letter F), the two-note barking figure, which had until now been purely a rhythmic

[21] Original Italian text: *il cane che grida / si deve suonare sempre molto forte e strappato.*

[22] Bruce Haynes, *The End of Early Music: A Period Performer's History of Music for the Twenty-Frist Century* (Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 102-110.

figure, is for the first time transformed into a melody in the solo violin part. This melody, along with the sobbing cello part at letter F, brings down the heat and facilitates a smooth transition "back to Vivaldi with frogs."[23]

Although the cantus firmus from Vivaldi's Largo is faithfully transcribed for the most part, there are moments of abrupt interruption where other motives or characters take over the texture, disrupting Vivaldi's familiar tapestry. The first time this occurs is measure 10, which represents an extra measure when compared to the harmonic progression and phrase length of Vivaldi's Largo – the second violins and violas, who had been responsible for the cantus firmus until now, suddenly take over the shaman chant and coqui motives, respectively. At measure 13, the cantus firmus is not interrupted but it is harmonically altered to fit Desenne's phrasing. Other instances when the cantus firmus is interrupted are measures 25, where Desenne adds an extra measure in response to the insistent nature of the solo violin. Measures 26 and 27 are also added bars, representing a slightly modified iteration of the statement in measures 24 and 25. From this point forward, the cantus firmus remains intact, until measure 44 where Desenne adds an exact repetition of measure 43 as all the voices gradually fade into silence. Like the end of the first movement, Desenne finishes this movement with a single voice –the last of the Coqui frogs finishes its song. This time, it is the tutti first violins who have the last word instead of the solo violin.

The animal, natural and spiritual worlds and the interaction with the human world are common themes in many of Desenne's works. While each of his works represents a very personal hybridization of different national musical styles, the spiritual can be seen as a recurrent and unifying theme. "Coquiloqio" is an example of Desenne's complex and often cacophonous contrapuntal writing style; it is about co-existence of different worlds, natural and human, where

[23] Desenne, program notes.

sometimes they interact with one another and other times they exist independently despite of one another.

III. "Wipers Gigavalse /Deslave (Landslide)"

> The spirit of the spring shower (last movement of Vivaldi's *Spring*, not quoted textually) lands on an automobile windshield, becoming a windshield-wiper jig. The droplets dance to the pulse of the wiper arms, the only moving things in a highway blocked by commuting traffic. After the wipers' jig, traffic moves ahead slowly; the solo violin plays a languid Venezuelan-style valse, accompanied murkily by the orchestra. (Our tropical cities in the rain can be as gloomy as any rainy city in the north.) The movement ends with a thick Afro-Venezuelan drumming dance, another typical Venezuelan rainy-season icon that is often heard on and around the summer solstice, particularly for the June 24 St. John celebrations, which are always drenched in rain. The orchestra becomes an Afro-Venezuelan drum ensemble, imitating everything in this exciting musical universe from the complex puzzle of percussion lines to the antiphonal dialogue of the choir with the solo voice in a dense and furious dance. This ending represents the deadly landslide – a tragic ending to the rainy season.[24]

This third movements is comprised of three main sections – the first section, embodying the spirit of a Baroque giga, has a 12/8 time signature; [25] the middle section, representing a Venezuelan waltz, starts at letter E and is in 3/4 meter; and the last section, the Afro-Venezuelan drums, starts at measure 99 and has a 6/4 time signature. Desenne brings back the cembalo for this final movement, which he had excluded in the previous. All three sections are permeated with incredibly complex rhythmic figures and ostinatos found independently in every part, which often do not line up with each for prolonged periods of time. Although all the parts conform to

---

[24] Desenne, program notes, score.

[25] The gigue is a dance with British roots which was likely imported into France in mid-17th century. During this time, the Italian giga also came to be, which differed from its French counterpart in that it was usually written in 12/8. Desenne uses the terms giga or its English derivative, *jig*, in his program notes about this movement, as opposed to the French spelling, gigue. Coincidentally, this movement conforms to the traditional Italian 12/8 giga meter. This dance became a staple movement in the traditional four-movement Baroque suite, both in its French and Italian forms. S.v. "Gigue". In *The Oxford Companion to Music,* by Jane Bellingham (Oxford University Press, 2011), https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780199579037.001.0001/acref-9780199579037-e-2876 (accessed 16 September 2019).

the steady pulse of each section's meter, there is a feeling of constant syncopation and opposing large beat subdivisions, primarily two against three and vice versa. The resulting effect of all the parts coming together with precision is extraordinarily intricate textures that are inevitably evocative of sprightly tropical dances.

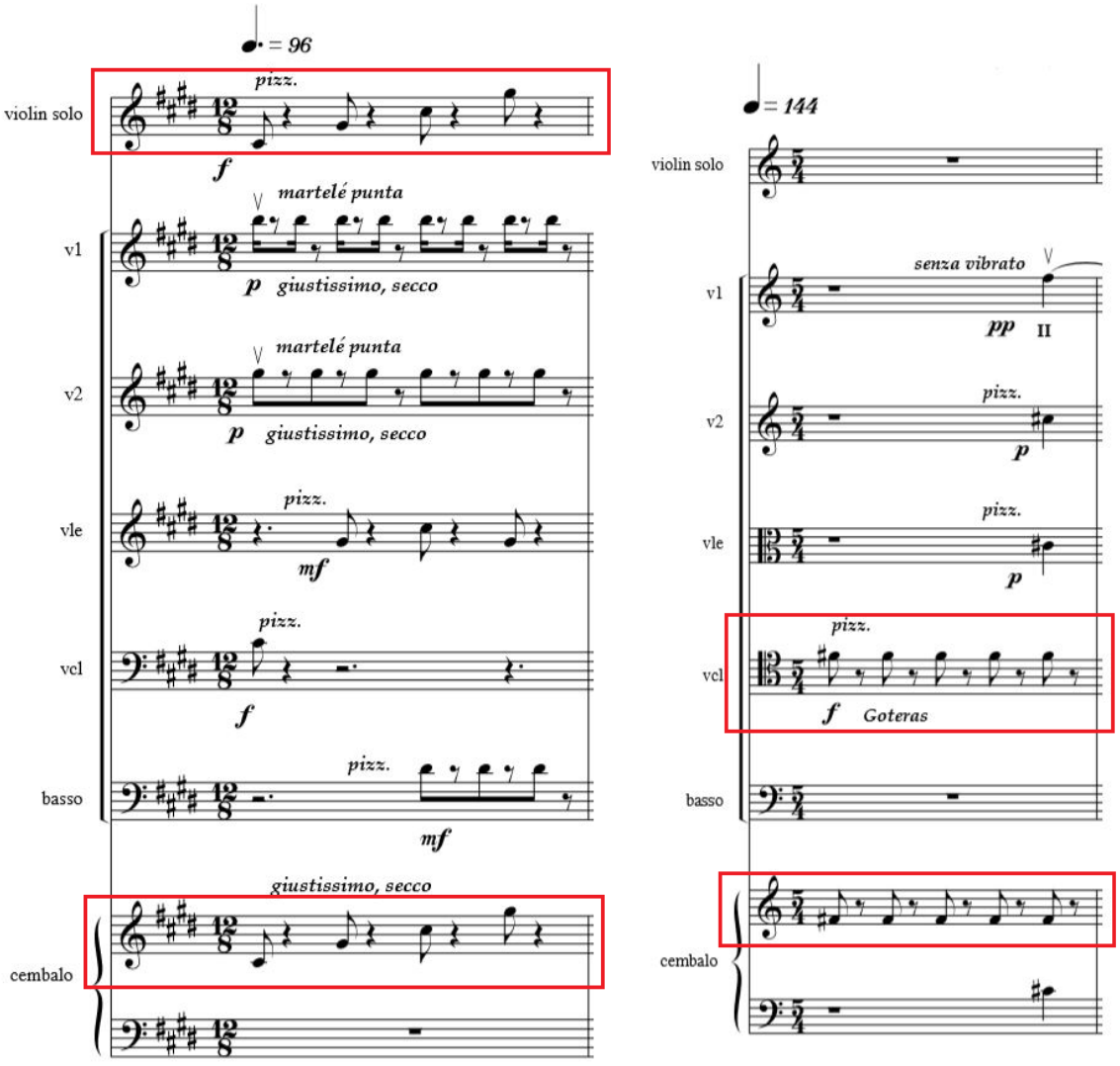
Desenne follows the common Baroque tradition of having a gigue dance form as the final movement in his concerto, inspired by Vivaldi's last movement of his *Spring* concerto. Like Desenne's "wipers jig," Vivaldi's *Danza Pastorale* is also in a 12/8 meter, and although the characters and contexts in the stories change, the programmatic imagery is the same between movements. The sonnet that accompanies Vivaldi's final movement translates as, "To the festive sound of pastoral bagpipes, nymphs and shepherds dance at spring's brilliant appearance."[26] Contrastingly, in Desenne's final movement, it is the rain droplets who dance to the pulse of the wiper arms at the rainy season's mercy. Even though Desenne's picture appears gloomy compared to Vivaldi's festive imagery, his gigue still comes across as contagiously ebullient. There is a certain humor in the way Desenne navigates through two opposing imageries – the inertia of blocked traffic due to heavy rain and the lively action of droplets dancing a "windshield-wiper jig." This optimistic and even humorous musical treatment of the darker realities and repercussions of nature on life in Latin America is a common theme throughout the concerto, which we particularly experience more tangibly in the first and third movements.

Although the scenery of the first and third movements has changed dramatically, Desenne meticulously connects distinctive elements in the two in a way that unifies and characterizes the rainy season theme of this concerto. One key element that he treats cyclically is the sound of raindrops, which opens both the first and third movements. In the first movement, this sound represents raindrops falling into tin cans through roof leaks and is portrayed by the

---

[26] Original text in Italian: *Di pastoral Zampogna al suon festante Danzan Ninfe e Pastor nel tetto amato Di primavera all' apparir brillante.*

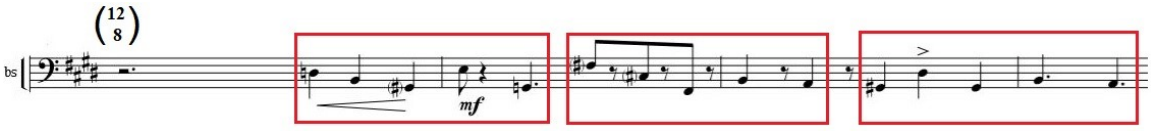
cello pizzicato and cembalo right hand in unison. In the third movement, a similar sound depicts the droplets landing on the windshields of traffic-jammed cars, dancing to the windshield-wiper's steady pulse. This time it is the solo violin pizzicato paired with the cembalo right hand that initially introduce the steady sound of droplets. The way the droplets are notated for these pairs of plucked instruments is another immediately tangible commonality between the two movements; Desenne places a single eighth note on every beat of the first measure in the accompaniment, instantly establishing a sense of perpetual motion (Example 24).



Example 24. Desenne, *Invierno,* "Gigavalse/Deslave," score, m. 1 (left) and "Goteras," score, m. 1 (right)

The viola promptly takes over the pizzicato droplets when the solo violin switches to the arco main theme, joined by sprinkled plucked droplets in the cello and bass parts for the first eight measures. The first and second violins contribute to the ceaseless regularity of pulse by adding a bowed rhythmic ostinato that remains unchanged until we reach letter D, the bridge to the next section at measure 34. From measure 9 until letter D, the viola and cello intermittently alternate between pizzicato droplets and bowed melodic fragments.

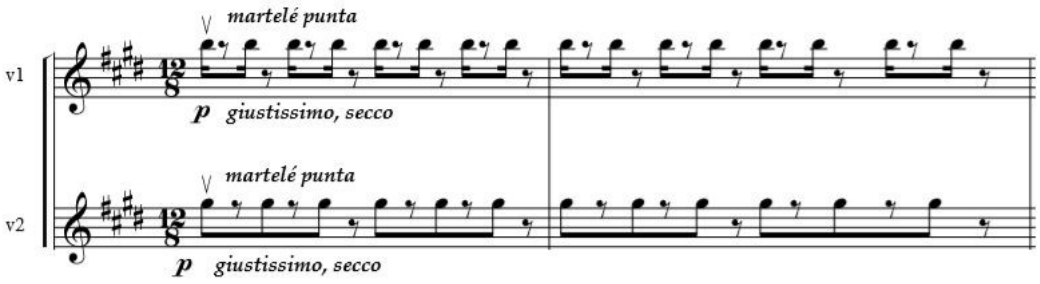
The bass remains pizzicato from the beginning until the next section at letter E; it has a peculiar line in that it starts out by inconspicuously lining up on the second half of every bar with the second violin rhythmic ostinato. However, it becomes increasingly more interesting starting at measure 9, with added syncopations and irregularly placed accents. It starts to spell out a disguised merengue rhythm that sounds as if it were notated in a slow 4/4 meter (Example 25). As mentioned in the analysis of the first movement, the Venezuelan merengue rhythm consists of five notes that are traditionally notated in 2/4 (eighth-note triplet plus two eight notes) or 5/8 (five equal eighth notes). However, it has a lilt on the fourth and fifth notes that is impossible to notate precisely, thus in performance these two notes lie somewhere between a 2/4 and a 5/8 meter. The version of merengue that the bass plays here is an augmentation of a merengue in 2/4; it infuses the gigue with a feeling of tropical dance and an infectious lilt amidst the regularity of the steady rhythmic ostinatos.



Example 25. Desenne, *Invierno,* "Gigavalse/Deslave," bass, mm. 14–17

There are two compositional ideas from Vivaldi's third movement of *Spring* that Desenne borrows and transfigures to better serve his tropical version of a Baroque gigue in the first section of the movement. The most prominent one is the use of ostinato – while Vivaldi's long-note

ostinatos represent the sound of pastoral bagpipes, Desenne's motoric and rhythmic ostinatos symbolize the steady pulse of the cars' windshield wipers. The first and second violins each play ostinatos of opposing yet steady rhythmic patterns, while the pizzicato droplets in the rest of the texture dance on top of them. The primary ostinato is in the first violin part – the rhythmic pattern and performance indications symbolize the literal meaning of a gigue,[27] leaping up and down with repeated "up" and "down" bows, which Desenne notates are to be played at the tip of the bow with a *martelé* stroke and in an exact and dry manner.[28] The second rhythmic ostinato is in the second violin part with alternating eighth notes and eighth note rests. With the same performance indications as the first violins, the rhythmic cell for this ostinato repeats every two beats rather than every beat, creating a contrasting overall effect of three against two for every half bar (Example 26).

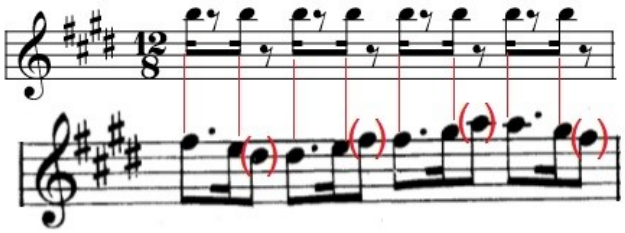


Example 26. Desenne, *Invierno,* "Gigavalse/Deslave," violins 1 and 2, mm. 1–2

[27] The term 'gigue' most likely originated from the Old French verb *giguer*, "to leap, gambol, or frolic." S.v. "Gigue." In *The International Encyclopedia of Dance,* by Susan Bindig (Oxford University Press, 2003), https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780195173697.001.0001/acref-9780195173697-e-0692 (accessed 13 October 2019).

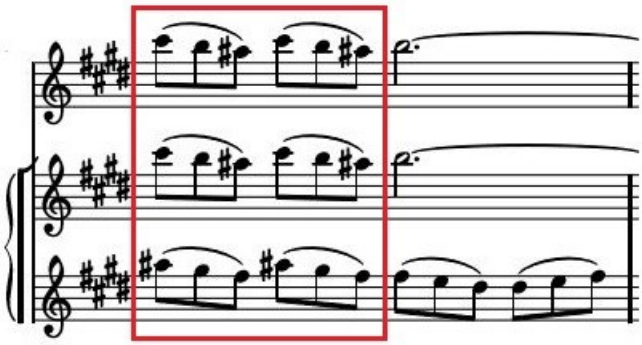
[28] Meaning 'hammered' in French, the term *martelé* refers to a heavy, detached bow stroke executed on bowed string instruments. S.v. "Martelé." In *The Oxford Companion to Music,* edited by Alison Latham (Oxford University Press, 2011), https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780199579037.001.0001/acref-9780199579037-e-4237 (accessed 18 November 2019).

This rhythmic motor is an altered version of the characteristic giga rhythm that pervades the main melody of Vivaldi's last movement of *Spring*. Desenne turns the traditional three-note rhythmic motive into a two-note duple pattern that battles two against three within each compound beat, adding a layer of zest and complexity to the rhythmic fabric of this section (Example 27).



Example 27. Desenne, *Invierno,* "Gigavalse/Deslave," violin 1, m. 1 (top) and Vivaldi, *Spring*, Allegro – *Danza pastorale*, violin 1, m. 82

The second motivic idea that Desenne quotes from the last movement of Vivaldi's *Spring* is a three-eighth-note stepwise descending motive. This three-note melodic cell appears most noticeably for the first time in measure 33 of Vivaldi's *Danza Pastorale*, where the three violins play two iterations of the same group of eighth notes (Example 28). In this instance, the motive appears as a passing figure, but in measure 36, Vivaldi develops it into thematic material in the solo and first violin parts. The three-note motive is also found throughout the movement presented in different forms, such as in single iteration, in augmentation as dotted-quarter notes, or in retrograde. Desenne treats the motive similarly, altering it not only rhythmically and directionally, but also chromatically.

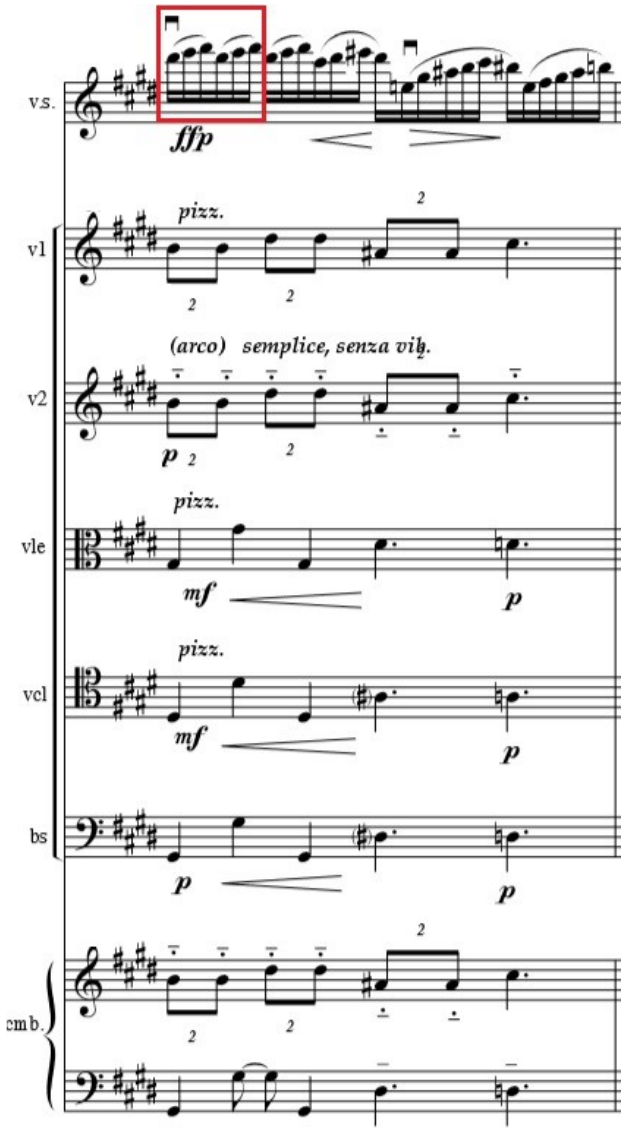


Example 28. Vivaldi, *Spring*, *Danza Pastorale*, solo and tutti violins, m. 33

Regardless of its form, Vivaldi always presents the three-note eighth note motive under a slur, which Desenne preserves through quotation and transformation. He borrows not only the three-note motive, but also Vivaldi's ingenuity in permutating the pattern in different ways. Desenne's presentation of the motive comes in the form of three slurred sixteenth notes, and it first appears in the middle of measure 26 when the solo violin repeats the chromatically evolving motive for several bars as if spinning it obsessively (Example 29).

Example 29. Desenne, *Invierno,* "Gigavalse/Deslave," solo violin, mm. 26–28

A retrograde version of the motive appears at measure 35 (letter D) for three measures, which becomes a bridge that descends into the middle section at E, the Venezuelan waltz. At letter D, the music experiences a sudden shift and it no longer feels like a giga – the ripieno violins and right hand of the cembalo play an insistent duple figure in unison, while the viola, cello, bass, and cembalo right hand play the merengue rhythmic pattern against them (Example 30). This unexpected textural and rhythmic uniformity in chorus produce a feeling of deceleration that abruptly brings us to the *vals* at letter E.



Example 30. Desenne, *Invierno,* "Gigavalse/Deslave," score, m. 35

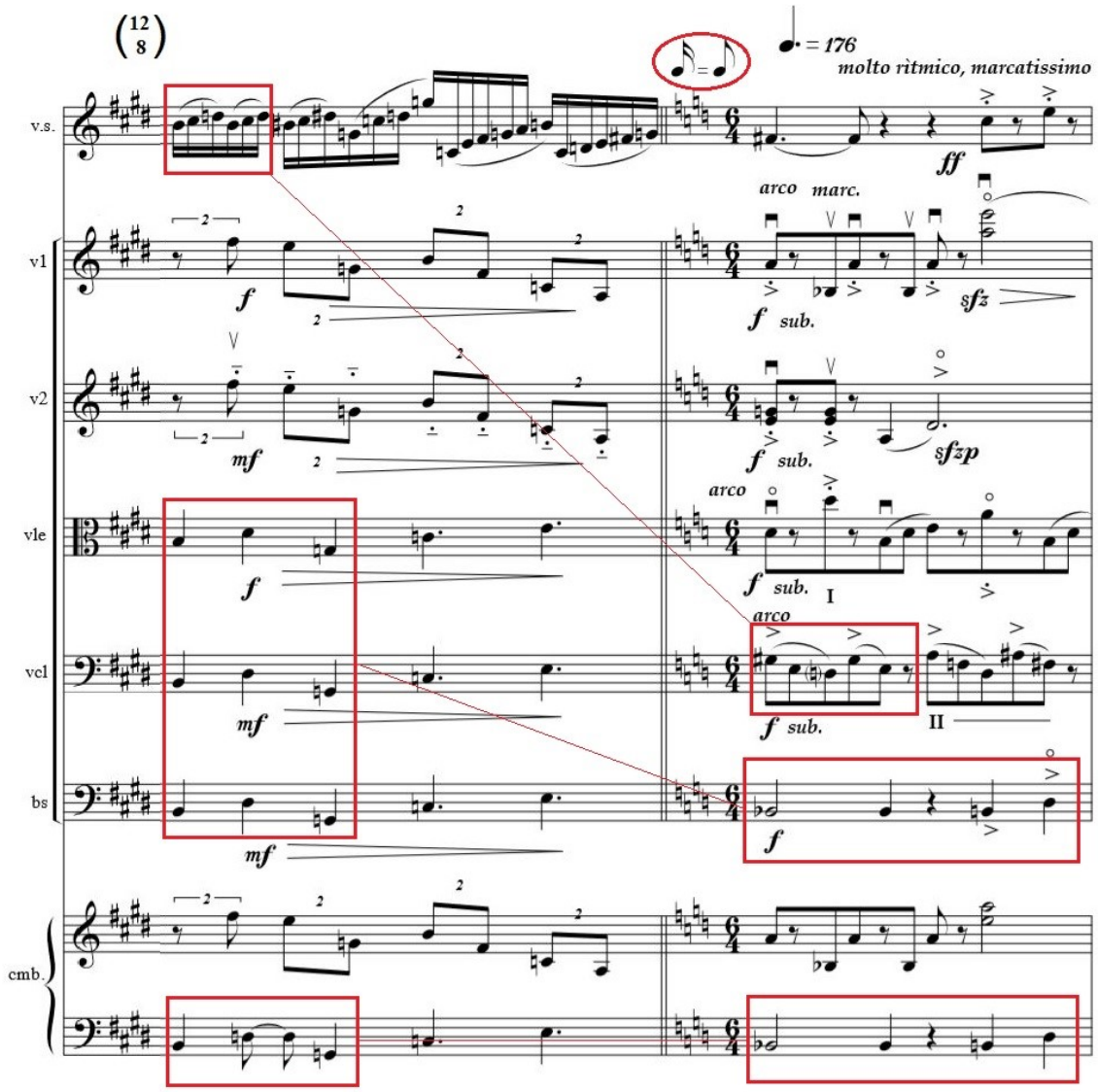
In the first movement of the concerto, Desenne explains that according to Argentine slang, when the syllables of the word "tango" are inverted the word reads "gotan;" translated to Spanish, *gota* means "drop" – as in rain drops. Though not explicitly stated in his program notes for the third movement, a similar idea is present in the title "Gigavalse/Deslave." The Spanish word *deslave* (translated as "landslide" in English) foresees the slow Venezuelan waltz that depicts traffic moving sluggishly during heavy rain. By this point, our ears have been

preconditioned for highly complex and dense rhythmic counterpoint between all the parts. In this Venezuelan waltz section, the texture of the orchestra is much thinner and the rhythms are perceived as much less elaborate and angular than they have been thus far. This waltz sounds not only languid, as Desenne describes it, but also quite weary, forlorn, and even annoyed at times. These are sentiments that invade anyone who has experienced driving under heavy rain conditions in regions with a fair amount of disregard for traffic lanes. The lilting orchestral rhythms in the waltz section and the comfortable register in all the parts relax the counterpoint and texture to the point where they sound a bit murky. Nevertheless, Desenne continues the idea of rhythmic ostinato from the previous section, though with leisurely rhythmic patterns. Performance indications in the accompaniment such as *sempre soave* – always soft or gentle – and *liscio* – smooth – contribute to the contrasting soundscape in this section.

Although Desenne starts final movement of the concerto with a giga like Vivaldi in *Spring*, he presents another Latin American dance to bring the concerto to an end. He suddenly introduces a fast and energetic polyrhythmic traditional Afro-Venezuelan drums dance at measure 99. At measure 96 (letter K), we hear the same bridge that we heard at measure 35 (letter D) between the giga and the Venezuelan waltz sections, only this time the four-measure bridge is transposed down a whole step. When we heard this bridge at letter D, it seemed like traffic was slowing down with the change from triple to duple subdivision of the beats, going from a fast giga to a slow waltz. However, the same bridge at letter K seems to have the opposite effect – the transition brings us out of the lethargy of the waltz and sparks alertness, which prepares us for the wild and final Afro-Venezuelan drums section. This new section is notated in a 6/4 time signature, and the beaming of the note groupings suggest that the pulse be felt in two beats per measure. Each voice of the ensemble – with the exception of the bass and cembalo left hand, which are doubling the same part and acting as one continuo team – carries the responsibility of a distinct and intricate rhythmic pattern that repeats with persistence. Together they form a

complex, intense, and exciting polyrhythmic accompaniment to the solo violin's improvisation. Like in the opening giga and the Venezuelan waltz section, rhythmic ostinatos also pervade the Afro-Venezuelan drums section, symbolizing a unifying theme throughout the movement. This Afro-Venezuelan drums section is last statement of defiance from the bounds and expectations of European structures. Desenne inventively transfigures the Baroque form into writing that is representative of Latin America's current syncretic musical language – one that is conscientious of the intersections of our history, culture, nature, and musical roots.

It is interesting to note the importance of Desenne's choice of notating the Afro-Venezuelan drums section in a 6/4 meter in regards to his careful treatment of rhythm in this concerto. He could have easily continued with a 12/8 time signature from letter K into the new section, with an indication to play the dotted-quarter pulse almost twice as fast in the latter (the tempo marking indicated the dotted-quarter equaling 96 at letter K, and it switches to the dotted-quarter equaling 176 at measure 99). Despite the obvious fact that it would be much more complicated to notate all of the complex rhythmic patterns contained in the Afro-Cuban drums section in 12/8 with smaller note values, there is a deeper underlying significance to Desenne's choice. As indicated on the score, the sixteenth-note value from letter K equals the value of the eighth note at the 6/4 section in measure 99. This allows the listener to hear a proportional correlation between the two sections, especially between the inverted figuration of the solo violin part at letter K and the cello part at measure 99. Additionally, the three-against-two rhythm – the first half of the Venezuelan merengue pattern – in the lower strings and cembalo left hand anticipate and then become the rhythmic foundation for the 6/4 section. There is a clear shift in the feeling of the pulse, which goes from a reminiscent and fleeting giga of four beats or pulses per measure to a much heavier and marcato dance of only two large beats or pulses per measure (Example 31).



Example 31. Desenne, *Invierno,* "Gigavalse/Deslave," score, mm. 98–99

In order to fully understand the meaning and feeling of the Afro-Venezuelan drums ensemble section, it is important to note the origin and role of this particular style of drumming in Venezuelan culture. This type of African-inspired dance is known in Venezuela as *tambor*;[29] it is

[29] Literary translated to English, the word *tambor* means "drums;" however, in Venezuelan culture the word *tambor* implicitly connotes Afro-Venezuelan drums dance.

an essential part of religious and secular celebrations throughout the country, though more so in the Caribbean coastal regions. The influence of African drums on Venezuelan traditional music started with the Spanish colonization in the early 16th century and the importation of African slaves primarily for mining, farming, and pearl diving.[30] The Hispanicized slaves had since then a deep impact on Venezuelan musical traditions, in particular the use of drums and dancing for religious worshiping. Over the course of the centuries, religious Afro-Venezuelan drums traditions merged with Catholicism brought over by the Spanish colonizers, and this amalgam has become a widely celebrated and honored tradition. This Afro-Venezuelan expression holds a protagonist role in many religious ceremonies, in particular the celebration of patron saints' days. The festivities of Saint John the Baptist (San Juan Bautista), which inspired Desenne in this movement, are of notable meaning in Afro-Venezuelan culture.[31]

The Catholic celebration takes place during summer solstice from June 23 and June 25. This was the only time of the year when slaves would be given time off and were allowed to congregate, which they would celebrate by drumming and dancing. Some of the characteristic drums of African descent used in this tradition that are still in use to this day are the *mina*, *curbata*, and *culo e'puya* drums, which are often accompanied by the indigenous conch and maracas. There are different stages in the celebration of the saint for which distinct drum ensembles and drumbeats are used; the stage that Desenne quotes in this last movement is the initial portion of the celebration with solo voice and responsorial choir singing against the dense

[30] S.v. "Afro-Venezuelans." In *Encyclopedia of World Cultures*, by David M. Guss and Lise Waxerd (Encyclopedia.com), https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/afro-venezuelans (accessed 14 November 2019).

[31] Brandt, Max H. "Drumming for San Juan in Barlovento and Beyond: African-Venezuelan Percussion Ensembles." In *Music in Latin America and the Caribbean: An Encyclopedic History*, edited by Malena Kuss (University of Texas Press, Austin, 2007), 463–464.

texture of the drums, accompanied by a *mina* drum ensemble.[32] This ensemble is primarily made up the long *mina* drum and upright *curbata* (Figure 3), and their characteristic drumbeat patterns are found as the rhythmic foundation in Desenne's orchestration. There are many variations to the traditional drumbeats that are also found in Desenne's texture. Since the long *mina* rests inclined on a wooden tripod, it allows for one player –the most virtuosic– to improvise on the head of the *mina* or *boca*, while other players strike its sides with *laures* (drumsticks) with accompanimental rhythmic variations (Figure 4).[33]

Figure 3. *Mina* (left) and *curbata* (right) drums (Photo by Max H. Brandt)

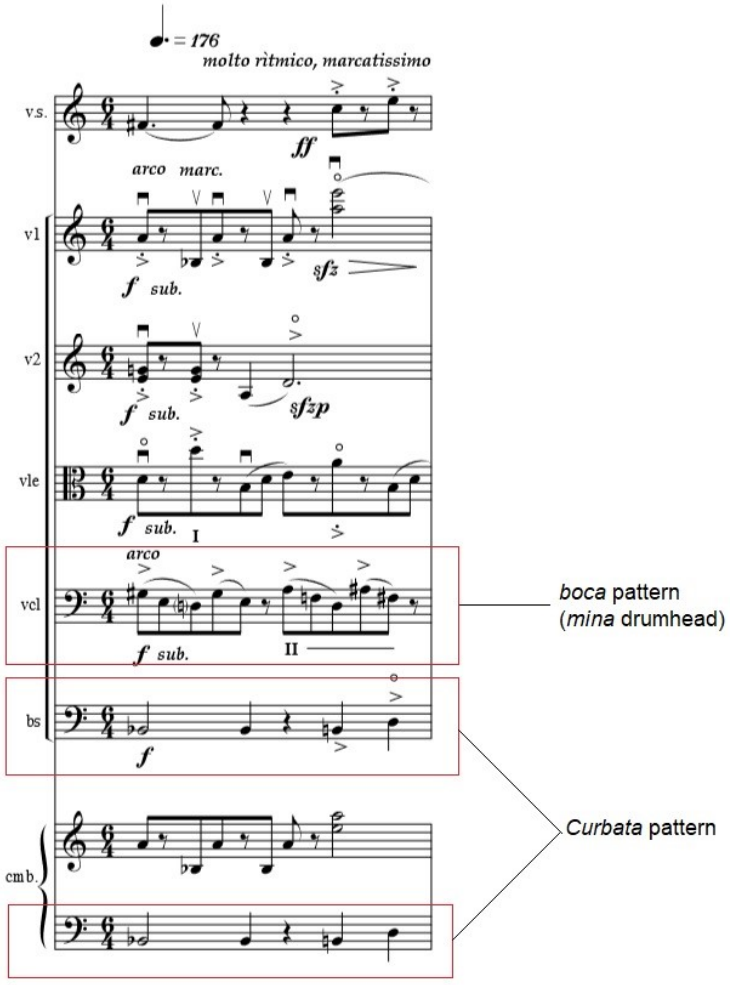
[32] The other traditional drum ensemble used in the *San Juan Bautista* celebrations is the *redondo* drums, also known as *culo e'puya*. The use of the two different types of drum ensembles varies not only in the different parts of the celebration, but also between communities.

[33] Brandt, "Drumming for San Juan," 465-466.

Figure 4. Multiple drummers playing the long *mina* drum with *laures* (drumsticks) while one plays on the drumhead (*boca*)

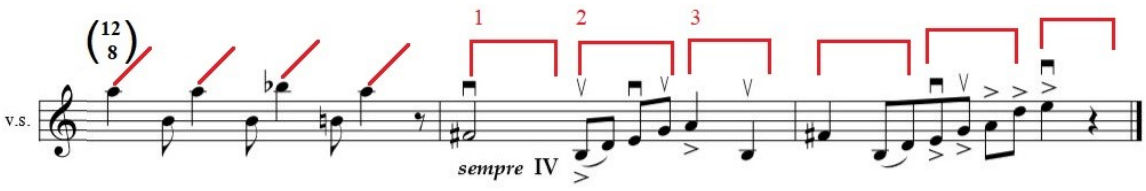
In Desenne's Afro-Venezuelan drums section, the cello plays the fast and virtuosic rhythm of the *boca*, and the bass and cembalo left hand play the basic *curbata* pattern (Example 32). The solo violin represents a solo voice improvising in responsorial manner on top of a bed of polyrhythmic drums. These festivities coincide with the start of the heavy rainy season in Venezuela, which does not stop the tempestuous and exuberant beating of the drums. The image of Afro-Venezuelan drummers vigorously performing a densely complex and high-spirited polyrhythmic bedrock for a revering solo voice and choir amidst torrential rain, combined with intensely energetic dancing, provides us with Desenne's original inspiration for this section. It also portrays of the sense of cultural resilience that Desenne aims to convey in our experience of this third and last section of "Gigavalse/Deslave." The furious Afro-Venezuelan drums dance ends the concerto with a hint of Baroque flair as the solo violin's accents insinuate a hemiola at

the end, switching to an implicit 3/2 meter over the two measures (Example 33).[34] The sudden shift in pulse from two to three beats per measure in the solo violin part combats the rest of the ensemble, which stubbornly remains in the previous pulse pattern and only joins the solo on the explosive last note – perhaps a brief satirical commentary on the Venezuelan fusion of our African and European roots.



Example 32. Desenne, *Invierno*, "Gigavalse/Deslave," score, m. 99

[34] A term denoting the ratio 3:2. In modern notation, a hemiola occurs when two bars in triple metre (e.g. 3/2) are performed as if they were notated as three bars in duple metre (6/4), or vice versa. This rhythmic device is common in music of the Baroque period. S.v. "Hemiola." In *The Orxford Companion to Music,* edited by Alison Latham (Oxford University Press, 2011), https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780199579037.001.0001/acref-9780199579037-e-3212 (accessed 3 November 2019).



Example 33. Desenne, *Invierno,* "Gigavalse/Deslave," solo violin, m. 167–end

In his program notes, Desenne explains that the ending of this movement represents the deadly landslide – a tragic ending to the rainy season. There are different reasons why landslides can be a severe threat during the rainy season in certain areas of the Caribbean tropics, the main one being the mountainous topography of coastal regions in northern Venezuela. During the last half century, these hillsides have been heavily urbanized due to rural exodus from other parts of the country and population growth. Shanty towns (*ranchos*) on these hills, such as the ones portrayed in "Goteras," are often more prone to the effects of natural disasters because of the way they are precariously built, but other types of infrastructures built on such areas are also at risk. One recent event that left a dark mark in Venezuelan history is the Vargas tragedy, a catastrophe painfully recalled by the landslide depiction at the end of the movement. During December 14–16, 1999 approximately a year's worth of rain fell on the north coast of Caracas in Vargas State, precipitating destructive landslides and debris flows that wiped out entire towns and killed tens of thousands of people – 10% of the Vargas population. It is considered one of Latin America's deadliest natural disasters in the 20th century.[35] Desenne brings us full circle in this movement – not only does he quote the sound of raindrops from the first movement in the giga, but he also brings back the soaked tin and cardboard houses of the shanty towns – only this time roof leaks

[35] G.F Wieczorek et al. "Debris-flow and flooding hazards associated with the December 1999 storm in coastal Venezuela and strategies for mitigation" (U.S. Geological Survey, December 2002) https://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2001/ofr-01-0144/ (accessed 20 May 20 2019).

are the least of their worries. Nonetheless, Desenne faces tragedy in a characteristic Latin American way – with resilience, passion, and a touch of satire.

Conclusion

Borrowing elements from Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" represents different layers of meaning in Desenne's concerto. On one hand, he pays homage to Vivaldi by using him as his primary inspiration in the gestation of this work. By doing so, he not only honors the Italian composer's masterwork but also intends to bring to our attention the strong musical connections forged between the Old and New Worlds as a result of the process of colonization. Desenne takes such connections to even deeper levels and brings awareness to the transformation that those musical roots underwent by means of the intertwining of different cultures in the New World, some brought over and others found already there. All of these cultural influences shaped what we know today as traditional music from Latin America, becoming its own diverse and rich musical language.

With this concerto, Desenne alters our perspective on musical history as we know it – instead of Western music influencing the course of music in Latin America, traditional music from Latin America takes the upper hand and not only influences Western music, but it dares to transform it and make it express our cultural and natural reality. Seen from this perspective, Desenne's music is not a composite of many different styles of music; it exists as its own musical language and an innovating new compositional voice in Latin America today. This new voice embraces its Western roots, but most importantly, it puts Latin American traditional music on a par with its European counterpart – enriching it, transfiguring it, and making it relevant to culture and geography.

Conceptually speaking, this is where we see Alejo Carpentier's influence on Desenne's work. What Desenne has done with Latin American concert and traditional music, the author

achieved in his literary works through the ideals of *Lo Real Maravilloso* and *the American Baroque*. Carpentier's work and philosophies are unquestionably reflected in Desenne's his work in many conceptual facets. However, two primary correlations are key to our perception and understanding of the "Two Seasons;" Desenne not only reclaims Latin American classical music's place in a Westernized world like Carpentier did with Latin American literature during his day, but he also embodies what Carpentier calls a "baroque spirit." He succeeds at materializing in musical form Carpentier's ideals for the future of art in Latin America.

Bibliography

Artez de Ramón y Rivera, Isabel. *Manual de Folklore Venezolano*. 2nd Ed. Caracas: Editorial Arte, 1969.

Barahona, Carlos Paz. "Juego, símbolo y fiesta en *Concierto Barroco* de Alejo Carpentier, una mirada desde la música." Filología y Lingüística XXXI (1): 71-78, 2005.

Biografias cortas. "Biografia de Alejo Carpentier." http://www.biografiascortas.com/2013/06/biografia-de-alejo-carpentier.html (accessed October 18, 2019)

Brandt, Max H. *Music in Latin America and the Caribbean: An Encyclopedic History. Volume 2: Performing the Caribbean Experience.* Edited by Malena Kuss. University of Texas Press, Austin, 2007.

Caminos, Miguel Angel. "Alejo Carpentier, entre la historia y el mito." La Nacion - Buenos Aires, 2004. https://www.lanacion.com.ar/cultura/alejo-carpentier-entre-la-historia-y-el-mito-nid669668 (accessed October 19, 2019)

Carpentier, Alejo. *Concierto barroco*. La Habana: Editorial Arte y Literatura, 1974.

———. *De lo real maravilloso Americano* in "Tientos y diferencias." Buenos Aires: Calicanto Editorial, 1976.

———. *La música en Cuba*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1946.

———. *Lo barroco y lo real maravilloso*. Tientos diferencias y otros ensayos. Barcelona: Plaza y Janés Editores, S.A., 1975.

———. *Lo real maravilloso de América*. El Nacional, 1948.

Cibercuba. "Alejo Carpentier." https://www.cibercuba.com/bio/escritor/alejo-carpentier (accessed October 19, 2019).

Desenne, Paul. *Las Dos Estaciones (del Trópico Caribeño) / The "Two Seasons" (of the Caribbean Tropics): Concerto for violin, strings and harpsichord, Invierno / Rainy Season.* 2003. Score.

———. *The "Two Seasons" (2003) / Winter 1. Roof Leaks.* Recorded live in Caracas, Venezuela 2003. Posted by "paul desenne," April 2010. https://youtu.be/Q_wf-QC4XeI (accessed February 9, 2014).

———. *The "Two Seasons" (2003) / Winter 2. Frog Assembly.* Recorded live in Caracas, Venezuela 2003. Posted by "paul desenne," April 2010. https://youtu.be/OEOPtWNVVPM (accessed February 9, 2014).

———. *The "Two Seasons" (2003) / Winter* 3. *Wipers Gigavalse/Landslide.* Recorded live in Caracas, Venezuela 2003. Posted by "paul desenne," April 2010. https://youtu.be/uTcWSBl1VtQ (accessed February 9, 2014).

———. http://www.pauldesenne.com (accessed February 6, 2014).

———. http://pauldesenne.com/latin-concert-music-program-notes.php (accessed February 6, 2014).

Ecured. "Concierto Barroco." https://www.ecured.cu/Concierto_barroco (accessed October 18, 2019).

———. "Real Maravilloso." https://www.ecured.cu/Real_Maravilloso (accessed October 18, 2019).

Fernandez, Luis Manuel. "Paul Desenne's Sonata for Violin Solo: A Theoretical and Practical Study." Doctoral dissertation, University of Miami, 2004.

Geminiani, Francesco. *The Art of Playing on the Violin*. London, 1751. Facsimile, London: Oxford University Press, 1951.

Guss, David M. and Waxerd, Lise. *Encyclopedia of World Cultures*. https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/afro-venezuelans (accessed 14 November 2019).

Haynes, Bruce. *The End of Early Music: A Period Performer's History of Music for the Twenty-Frist Century.* Oxford University Press, 2007.

Herbert, Trevor. *Music in Words: A Guide to Researching and Writing about Music.* Oxford University Press, 2009.

Herbozo, Jose. "Kerr, Lucile, and Alejandro Herrero-Olaizola, eds. *Teaching the Latin American Boom*. New York: MLA, 2015." Dissidences: Vol. 8 : Iss. 13 , Article 1, 2018. https://digitalcommons.bowdoin.edu/dissidences/vol8/iss13/1 (accessed May 25, 2020).

Hollander, Martha. "Baroque Aesthetics." In *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*. Oxford University Press, 1998. https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780195113075.001.0001/acref-9780195113075-e-0059 (accessed November 1, 2018).

Holoman, D. Kern. *Writing about Music: A Style Sheet from the editors of 19th-Century Music.* University of California Press, 1988.

Hudde, Hermann. "Rupturas con las tradiciones musicales de la modernidad a través del mestizaje y lo real maravilloso: Una conversación con el compositor Paul Desenne." Latin American Music Review*,* Volume 36, Number 1, pp. 45-67, *Spring*/*Summer* 2015.

———. "Tertulia con Paul Desenne (A gathering with Paul Desenne)." Revista Musical Chilena, Año LXXI, julio-diciembre, 2017, Nº 228, pp. 95-111.

Ireland, Corydon. “Of the Bean I Sing: History of coffee inspires Radcliffe Fellow’s opera.” Harvard Gazette, 2011. https://www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/news/in-news/bean-i-sing (accessed January 11, 2020).

López, Victor. “Latin Rhythms: Mystery Unraveled” for Midwest Clinic 59th Annual Conference. Sponsored by Alfred Publishing Company, 2005. https://www.midwestclinic.org/user_files_1/pdfs/clinicianmaterials/2005/victor_lopez.pdf (accessed October 19, 2019).

Mariscal, Nicholas. *Nubes Bajas: a collection of solo cello music from Latin America.* Bloomington, IN: Trustees of Indiana University, 2013, compact disc.

Matthews, Kyle. “Baroque Jazz: Toward a New Understanding of Musical Form in Carpentier’s Concierto Barroco.” Latin American Literary Review, Volume 44 / Number 87, 2017.

Montilla, Javier A, "The flute music of Paul Desenne: A comparative analytical study of representative works." Doctoral dissertation, University of Nebraska – Lincoln, 2010.

Mozart, Leopold. *A Treatise on the Fundamental Priciples of Violin Playing.* Translated by Editha Knocker, 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1951.

Peñín, José and Walter Guido. *Enciclopedia de la Música en Venezuela*. Caracas: Fundación Bigott, 1988.

Publishers Weekly. “Concerto Barroco.” https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-0-933031-12-8 (accessed March 10, 2019).

Quantz, Joseph Joachin. *On Playing the Flute*. Translated by Edward R. Reilly. 2nd ed. New York: Shirmer Books, 1985.

Rondón, Tulio Jose. “Cultural hybridization in the music of Paul Desenne: An integration of Latin American folk, pop and indigenous music with Western classical traditions.” Doctoral dissertation, University of Arizona, 2005.

Rosen, Charles. *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven*. Expanded Ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997.

Steblin, Rita. *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*. Rochester: Univ. of Rochester Press, 2002.

Stowell, Robin. *The Early Violin and Viola: a Practical Guide*. Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Tovey, Donald Francis. *Essays in Musical Analysis. Volume III Concertos.* Oxford University Press, 1946.

Vivaldi, Antonio. *Violin Concerto in E major, RV 269*. Edited by Nels Drue Daily. ND Music Edition, No.004, 2010.

https://imslp.org/wiki/Violin_Concerto_in_E_major%2C_RV_269_(Vivaldi%2C_Antonio).

———. *Violin Concerto in F minor, RV 297*. Edited by Nels Drue Daily. ND Music Edition, No.004, 2010. https://imslp.org/wiki/Violin_Concerto_in_F_minor%2C_RV_297_(Vivaldi%2C_Antonio).

———. *Violin Concerto in G minor, RV 315*. Score. Edited by Nels Drue Daily. ND Music Edition, No.004, 2010. https://imslp.org/wiki/Violin_Concerto_in_G_minor%2C_RV_315_(Vivaldi%2C_Antonio).

———. *Concerto in Mi Maggiore per violin, archi e organo (o cembalo) "La Primavera" Da "Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'invenzione."* Edited by Gian Francesco Malipiero. Milano: G. Ricordi & C., 1950.

———. *Concerto in Sol minore per Violino, Archi e Organo (o Cembalo) "L'Estate" Da "Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'invenzione."* Edited by Gian Francesco Malipiero. Milano: G. Ricordi & C., 1950.

———. *Concerto in Fa minore per Violino, Archi e Organo (o Cembalo) "L'Inverno" Da "Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'invenzione."* Edited by Gian Francesco Malipiero. Milano: G. Ricordi & C., 1950.

———. *Concerto I "La Primavera,"* from *Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'invenzione, Op. 8.* Amsterdam: Michel-Charles Le Cène, n.d.[1725]. https://imslp.org/wiki/Il_cimento_dell%27armonia_e_dell%27inventione,_Op.8_(Vivaldi,_Antonio).

———. *Concerto II "L'Estate,"* from *Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'invenzione, Op. 8.* Amsterdam: Michel-Charles Le Cène, n.d.[1725]. https://imslp.org/wiki/Il_cimento_dell%27armonia_e_dell%27inventione,_Op.8_(Vivaldi,_Antonio).

———. *Concerto IV "L'Inverno,"* from *Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'invenzione, Op. 8.* Amsterdam: Michel-Charles Le Cène, n.d.[1725]. https://imslp.org/wiki/Il_cimento_dell%27armonia_e_dell%27inventione,_Op.8_(Vivaldi,_Antonio).

Wahlström, Viktor. "Lo real maravilloso y lo barroco Americano: Estudio crítico sobre dos conceptos de Alejo Carpentier." Master's thesis, Lunds Universitet, 2012.

Wieczorek, G.F., Larsen, M.C., Eaton, L.S., Morgan, B.A., and Blair, J.L. "Debris-flow and flooding hazards associated with the December 1999 storm in coastal Venezuela and strategies for mitigation"" U.S. Geological Survey, December 2002. https://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2001/ofr-01-0144/ (accessed May 20, 2019).

Zamora, Lois Parkinson and Faris, Wendy B, editors. "Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community." Duke University Press, 1995.

Zavarce, Saúl. “Venezuelan Music: the best kept secret in the Caribbean.” http://fiestajazz.com/articulo.html (accessed November 13, 2019).